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Irish Baptists Witness  
In Warn-Town Country

74-31

By Larry Jerden  
for Baptist Press

Baptists in Northern Ireland are no "neutral third party" in the conflict that rages between Catholic and Protestant in their island homeland--they are a part of the Anglo-Irish Protestant majority.

As such they have had two of their active Baptist laymen assassinated by the Irish Republican Army Provisionals, seen several other members killed in bomb blasts and have repeatedly had to repair church buildings, businesses and homes damaged by explosives.

Joshua Thompson, secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland, commented on the effects of the conflict on Irish Baptists in his Belfast office:

"I could, of course, tell about church buildings damaged by bombs--there have been several--but let me tell about Raymond Denham.

"Ray was Sunday school superintendent at East End Baptist Church here in Belfast. I think he was about 43 or 44.

"He was a printer, the only Protestant working in his plant. Good printers were hard to find, and the Catholic foreman was more than glad to hire him if he was willing to work in his plant.

"He was willing, but Raymond was also a reserve policeman--a member of a body formed specifically to help the overworked police in their efforts to combat terrorism.

"One night, as he was working, a group of young assassins entered the plant. Some fellow worker--never identified--pointed Ray out, and he was shot in the back. He never saw his murderers." Denham left a widow and two children.

Sadly, it was not difficult for Thompson to recount another story of another Raymond--Raymond Wylie. He was a 25-year-old policeman and youth leader at Lisbon Baptist Church. Wylie and a fellow policeman were ambushed and killed while on patrol. He, too, left a young widow.

Other stories followed, of three Irish Baptist church members who went for an afternoon stroll and were killed when a car bomb exploded next to them. And of a man who went out into the country to get away from the dangers and the pressure, only to be killed by a bomb in the small town he visited.

Great Victoria Street Baptist Church in Belfast, one of the largest Irish Baptist churches with more than 400 members, is located across the street from the often bombed train station. It has long since ceased counting how many times its windows have been blown out, and now posts its own guards for members who drive their cars to services.

Other churches have had roofs blown off, walls caved in--all by the terrorists who perpetuate hatred in the divided province.

But amid the killing and the damage, the terror and the threats, Irish Baptists, some 7,500 of them, continue to minister, continue to evangelize both in the Province of Northern Ireland--part of the United Kingdom--and in the Republic of Ireland.

One of the union's programs, which has had to take on an increased role during the conflict, is the orphan's society. Among others, it is caring for the widows and orphans of Denham and Wylie.

Nor has trouble at home deterred Irish Baptists from their mission thrust. The Irish union has 14 foreign missionaries on the field in Peru and on the European continent, but even that is not a full measure of its overseas involvement.

"Our churches also support several independent overseas missions, and some support the Baptist Missionary Society based in London," Thompson said.

"A study three years ago showed 85 foreign missionaries on the field from Irish Baptist churches," he said, averaging one per church in the union.

Thompson also pointed out that, unlike the situation in almost every other European country and with almost every other religious body, Irish Baptists have continued a numerical increase since records were begun in 1865.

Since 1921, for example, when British Baptists hit their numerical peak, Irish Baptists have tripled in number.

"Our churches are keen on evangelism," Thompson explained. "They all have visitation programs, are trying to get all-age Sunday School, and we have a number of full-time youth workers."

"The trouble has been a challenge to the local church," commented Jim Henry, pastor of Bloomfield Baptist Church, located near a working-class Protestant area. "It has been a challenge to our faith, but our people have risen to the occasion. They have made special efforts to attend meetings--even taking the risks to attend night prayer meetings."

"The trouble has shown us a new ministry to children," said Foster Wright, pastor of Church Street East Baptist Church, "and has forced us to shift our emphasis from night to day meetings. We have had some open-air meetings for children, and have instituted house meetings for those unable to get to the church."

Young people from several churches went out in twos and threes during the height of the recent workers' strike that cut power and transportation throughout the province. They risked going out simply to visit and reassure elderly people who were more affected by the situation than they felt they were themselves.

There might have been even more visitation and other work done, one pastor said, but "pastors were very loathe to let their people out in the streets. The streets are narrow, the communities are crowded and a rifle bullet can travel two miles," he said.

Because of the political situation, contact with Roman Catholics in the north is very rare. The pastors and denominational officials said contact with Catholics does not exist, with one notable exception.

"The charismatic movement is the one movement that seems to have crossed Protestant-Catholic lines," Wright said. "They come together for fellowship in a divided community. There are things in the movement that would be cause for concern, but they have done what no official bodies have been able to do."

Irish Baptists minister in a situation that many Americans would find intolerable. That they continue to grow is more amazing. But their eyes are set on the future, no matter how clouded that future may be. (BP)

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**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226**Churches Must Minister to  
Or Lose Divorced Persons**

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Churches can no longer ignore divorce. The problem is too serious to have business as usual. Southern Baptist churches are confronted with either ministering to divorced persons or losing them completely.

Both Foy Valentine of Nashville, Tenn., leader of a Bible and Life Conference here, and Charles V. Petty of Raleigh, N.C., guest lecturer, agreed on the assessment of the problem of divorce.

Valentine, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and sponsor of the conference, told the conferees at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, "Christians and churches cannot ignore the hurt, the suffering, the needs, the opportunities and the responsibilities that are related to divorce.

"The divorce rate has been climbing steadily so that now the United States has the highest divorce rate of any nation on earth," reported Valentine, "and in most urban areas there are as many divorce suits filed as there are marriage licenses issued each year. Instead of getting better the matter is actually getting worse. This touches every church and almost every family in our churches.

"Christians are responsible for a ministry of reconciliation to divorced persons, and churches must do far more practical ministries for the divorced than we have thus far undertaken. We are responsible, too, for providing clear Bible teaching, strong Bible preaching and consistent Christian discipline so as to preserve Christian marriage and develop Christian homes. God's ideal has always been one man and one woman, joined together for life in the bonds of holy matrimony," he added.

Petty, executive director of the North Carolina Baptist Christian Life Council, told the group that much of what churches say and do about divorce has no meaning to people, therefore, he said, "I am convinced people will listen and respond when church leaders talk openly and honestly about divorce."

He outlined ways in which to minister to the divorced person: (1) Ministers should preach on the subject--the emphasis should be both on the sinfulness of the problem as well as the spirit of forgiveness. (2) Churches must sponsor conferences for singles as well as teach and study biblical principles on divorce. (3) Christians should visit people who are divorced to provide emotional support, personal assistance in finding jobs and care for their children. (4) Both churches and individual Christians must press for more institutional support.

Petty said his impression is "that about 90 per cent of all Southern Baptists are sympathetic toward divorced persons. However, the other 10 per cent do great harm to those who are sincerely trying to find God's will in their life.

"Unfortunately," he continued, "a snide remark in a Sunday School class or a negative word from the pulpit is often all the divorced person hears. In a survey I have taken," Petty continued, "I discovered the distressing facts that 70 per cent of Baptist people who are divorced said that no one came from the church to visit them after their divorce.

"We must involve the divorced person in the life of the church," stressed Petty. "We must actively recruit qualified divorced persons for places of leadership within the church. The church is a couples oriented organization, so we must take special efforts to make provisions for the divorced.

"A divorced person," concluded Petty, "becomes fair game for all sorts of abuse, exploitation, ridicule, gossip and avoidance. One of their most pressing needs is a community that cares about them. What communities should be better equipped to do that than the churches?"

Conferees Face Wide  
Ranging Topics at Ridgecrest

By Floyd Craig

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Seldom have so many subjects been discussed so much in so short a time--15 in 6 days! And all the topics were tough--divorce, separation of church and state, integrity, violence, the death penalty, economics, alcohol, family life, sexuality, women's liberation, citizenship and race.

"It was almost like a revival," said Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and the sponsor of the conference on The Bible and Life here.

Valentine, who led all the sessions at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, had strong words for those Southern Baptists who ignore the world around them and "believe that they get their souls saved during the summer after they are nine years old and forget about it the rest of their lives.

"I am interested in helping Southern Baptists to find new ways to communicate that the Bible has to do with all of life," explained Valentine.

Early in the conference, Valentine focused on the Christian's responsibility of being a good citizen, even in the face of current cynicism and the fear that qualified people will not now be involved in the improvement of the political system.

Valentine explained that Southern Baptists must be on guard to elect the right people to public office. Even if a Christian is running, he said, it does not mean that that person would automatically be qualified. "Not enough Christians make it a point to discover the real background of people running for public office," Valentine said. "A lot of church people today vote for a person running for office because he teaches a Sunday School class or tithes or abstains from drinking liquor.

"Not enough Christians make it a point to find out his views about taxes, his effectiveness in translating his political ideas into concrete projects, his relationships to special interests, his commitment to lighten the burdens of the needy, his views of the grave social issues that affect us in these times," Valentine continued.

"Christians ought to use moral discernment in determining who is running a political candidate and who finances his campaign," explained Valentine. "It sometimes happens that evil forces put up 'righteous' people as candidates to hoodwink the voters. Under such circumstances if better moral forces had happened to be supporting a candidate with less widely advertised personal virtues, the Christian citizen may decide, in his use of moral discernment, that the right thing to do is not to vote for the 'best' person, but for the person who represents the best moral forces.

"One of the greatest scandals in America is the bad citizenship of otherwise good and thoughtful people. We can no more wash our hands of responsibilities we have as Christians in the area of politics and the use of power than Pontius Pilate could wash his hands of his responsibility" in relationship to the crucifixion of Christ, Valentine warned.

"With recent developments, 'law and order' has been bound and flung into the fire furnace, but they are emerging already from the flame," predicted Valentine. "An individual more powerful than any king on earth has fallen, but our government stands. There is much more rebuilding that must now be done," Valentine said.

"Politics, the science of government, is a part of God's plan for life in this world. Christians are obligated to participate in politics and be involved in the political process--in spite of all the recent political scandal," he added.

"The moral tone of a city, a state, or a country is not set basically by government but by the people," observed Valentine. "If the citizens personally practice honesty, justice, respect for authority, obedience to the law, honor, integrity, truthfulness, mercy and love--then these qualities will inevitably find expression in public life."

Valentine made the assessment also that "the race problem has not gone away, and it will not go away a decade from now or a century from now. The race issue is still one of the most divisive issues in American life and in church life."

"Our name--the Southern Baptist Convention--identifies us with the Civil War and with slavery, and I, for one, think we ought to change the name," urged Valentine. "We are changing. We are finding ways to work through the race problem in our heritage. There is no use denying who we are, but we don't have to forever identify with such a lost cause and such a wrong cause, as human slavery. And we are making some stumbling steps in the direction of righting the racial wrong with which we have been connected in the past."

Speaking on pollution, Valentine charged, "The people of the United States are about to be brutally raped by big business and government, which are conspiring to postpone pollution controls or abolish them outright."

"Responsible citizens and concerned Christians must work together so as not to relinquish ground gained and so as to extend the move begun already toward pollution control," charged Valentine.

"The demands of Christ," challenged Valentine, "require Christians to be concerned not only with souls but also about stomachs and lungs and minds and babies and slaves and women and workers and freedom and economics and politics. Christian love knows no bounds and Christian concerns can tolerate no fences."

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Baptist Leader Hits Proposal  
of Federal Aid To Churches

8/16/74

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist spokesman here scored a bill in Congress, which, if enacted into law, would result in a multi-million dollar windfall from the federal government for churches, their agencies and other charitable institutions.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, attacked a proposal by Rep. H. John Heinz III (R.-Pa.), which would provide income tax credits to taxpayers for a portion of their gifts to churches and other charitable agencies. The plan would violate the principle of voluntarism in religion and also is of questionable constitutionality, Wood said.

Heinz, in a statement to the House of Representatives, said that his bill (H.R. 15722), which he introduced earlier this year, would "provide a badly needed boost to American taxpayers and to American churches and charitable organizations in the continuing struggle against inflation."

The Heinz proposal is that a taxpayer could choose either the present deduction for charitable contributions or a tax credit for 50 per cent of his or her charitable contributions, whichever is most beneficial.

Under this new proposal, the tax credit limit would be \$500 for the single taxpayer or \$1,000 on a joint return. The net effect of the plan would be to increase a middle income taxpayer's deduction from the current 15 or 20 per cent to 50 per cent should the measure become law.

In his latest statement to the House of Representatives, Heinz elaborated on why he is proposing this new federal aid. He said that churches and charities were "caught in a deadly crunch" brought on by a decline in contributions due to inflation.

Appealing for governmental aid to the churches, Heinz said, "I do not believe that we in Congress can stand by while religious, educational and charitable organizations wither and die, because the average American must reduce his or her donations in order to pay for life's necessities for his or her family."

Wood said in his statement on the Heinz proposal, "While the desire to put more money into the treasuries of the churches is highly commendable, and, indeed, attractive to many more--"

churchmen, the way it should be done is by voluntary stewardship rather than by governmental action.

"One of the strengths of religion in America," Wood continued, "has been that, in the absence of financial support by government, the churches and synagogues have relied on the dedication of their own members for the advancement of their particular views.

"Not only does the principle of voluntarism in religion militate against federal financial aid to the churches, it is highly questionable that such a proposal as tax credit for gifts to churches is acceptable to the Constitution that prohibits "an establishment of religion."

Wood further observed, "already the Supreme Court has ruled that tax credit to parents for tuition paid for their children in church schools is a violation of Constitutional separation of church and state. It is difficult to see how this proposed financial bonanza for the churches can meet the constitutional test, when the lesser benefit to church schools has already failed the test."

Congressman Heinz in 1973 introduced a tax reform bill (similar to the 1972 Mills-Mansfield proposal that aroused a national barrage of mail from churches and charitable organizations) that would have repealed the present law allowing income tax deductions for charitable contributions.

The ostensible purpose of the earlier proposed repeal measure was "to insure congressional review of tax preferences and other items which narrow the tax base." Those who made the proposal at the time tried to explain that they were not necessarily opposed to tax deductions for church contributions but that they wanted every tax benefit allowance to undergo renewed scrutiny and justification.

Most church people throughout the nation did not hear this part of the congressmen's explanation. The result was a major protest against the Mills-Mansfield proposal.

A legislative aide to Heinz explained that the congressman was "very upset by the misinterpretation and misunderstanding" of the bill he introduced last year, the tax policy review act, in which people thought he opposed charitable deductions on income tax.

"We've been searching for a way to encourage contributions," the aide said, and this seemed to us a simple way to do it: you total up your contributions at the end of the year and get 50 per cent of them back up to a total of \$500 for the single taxpayer and \$1,000 on a joint return."

The House Ways and Means Committee, of which Rep. Wilbur Mills (D.-Ark.) is chairman, now has a tax reform package under consideration. It is possible that the tax reform bill can be reported out of committee in September. Heinz is pushing for his tax credit proposal to be included in this new bill.

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#### CORRECTION

In Baptist Press mailing of 8-12-74, entitled "Emphasis on Evangelism Permeates BWA Meeting," in graph 4 change Baptist Convention of Guiana to Baptist Cooperative Convention of Guyana; change African Baptist Assembly of Bolivia to African Baptist Assembly of Malawi,

Thanks, Baptist Press

#### CORRECTION

In Baptist Press mailing of 8-15-74, entitled "Churches Try to Keep Church Staff Salaries Rising," in graph 4 on page 2, change the numerals 750 to 999 in second line to read: 500 to 749. In the third line of that graph change the numerals 500 to 749 to read: 750 to 999. In other words these were inadvertently transversed when the copy was edited. In line 2 of the graph, change the word smaller to larger. Lines 2 and 3 of that graph should now read: higher average compensation from churches with 500 to 749 membership than from larger congregations of 750 to 999 membership. Again, the Annuity Board spokesman...etc.

Thanks, Baptist Press