

November 5, 1974

## Still Stereotyped

'Women Generally Equal  
As Baptist Missionaries'

74-75

RICHMOND (BP)--Today's Southern Baptist woman foreign missionary draws equal pay, generally stands "toe to toe" with the men as equals, has equal voting rights and shares leadership and hardships with the men on the field, asserts a report from the denomination's Foreign Mission Board, the world's largest evangelical missionary sending agency.

Southern Baptist woman missionaries--working for the nation's largest Protestant evangelical denomination--"for decades have served in roles and in places where only men were expected to serve," notes Jesse C. Fletcher in the November 1974 issue of the Commission, monthly publication of the board.

Citing a frequent "interchange of jobs between men and women on the foreign field," Fletcher, director of the board's mission support division, says that in most places the missionaries--male or female--can exert influence commensurate with responsibility.

The men and women missionaries serve on the same committees and advise at the highest levels, says Fletcher. There are, however, Fletcher states in the same issue, still lingering stereotypes and prejudices evident against women in today's Baptist mission effort, a fact noted by some woman missionaries under board appointment.

Fletcher notes that for years, women appointed by the Foreign Mission Board have outnumbered men. But, he says, the percentage of single women appointed has dropped from 27 per cent of appointees for 1948 to 10 per cent in 1968. The latter percentage has remained fairly constant to the present time.

It's most likely, Fletcher states, "that the percentage of single women in relationship to couples in the foreign mission field has dropped because of the increased alternatives for single women here in the United States.

"In earlier days," Fletcher says, "a (Baptist) young woman had fewer choices. She could marry or teach or be a missionary."

Even with the decrease in the percentage of single women going to the foreign field, of 229 missionaries appointed in 1973 by Southern Baptists, 57 per cent of the appointees were women.

They are part of the 12.3 million member Southern Baptist Convention's missionary force, which has 2,579 missionaries working in 81 nations. More than 800,000 members of over 6,900 churches in other nations are related to Southern Baptist work.

The woman missionary's role in this worldwide mission is one of surprisingly many hats.

"She is hostess, writer, music director, trainer of pastors, cook, secretary, publisher of hymnals, mother, teacher, translator, correspondence director, architect, barber, typist, doctor," The Commission cites.

Her role is one of contrasts. She teaches theology and sewing, edits Bible study materials, drives an ambulance, repairs a generator or bicycle, makes drapes and formulates plans, works with children, students, women and pastors. She reports news and presides at meetings. The list is myriad.

"Perhaps, one of the hardest things is to find one's personal role, with all its variations, and fulfill it," says missionary Sue (Mrs. Dick D.) Rader of Zambia.

Opinions differ among some women missionaries as to what their roles should be. One writes, "I feel that my greatest contribution to my husband's work is to be at home, to keep a home and make our home what a home should be--a place of physical and spiritual sustenance'.

Yet, another says, "Every woman on the mission field is appointed as a missionary, and if she does not have some definite mission responsibility outside the home, she shouldn't be called a missionary."

With or without equality among the foreign mission force of Baptists, frustrations and tensions are evident for the women and men. These include cultural adjustments, maintaining a proper balance and perspective between the homelife and outside responsibilities, overcoming loneliness where it exists, combatting stereotypes in cultures where it is considered the norm for women to be married, among others.

Stereotypes of national Baptists concerning women may plague the married woman missionary as well as the single woman.

"National Baptist leaders may not understand that the wife of a missionary is also a missionary," says one married woman missionary. "They may simply think of her as the 'domestic service that goes along with the household,' or an interested Christian who will do something in a local situation if asked."

In spite of assertions about woman missionaries' equality, Indy (Mrs. Charles W. ) Whitten says "women are seldom elected to offices in a mission (organization of SBC missionaries).

"This grows not only out of recognition of the problems a missionary woman might encounter in going to meetings in other cities, but also because her 'sister' missionaries may not vote for her, feeling a man would be more appropriate in the position.

"No doubt, the easiest course is to cooperate with the prevailing attitudes of the host country in regard to women...If women are in a somewhat secondary place, as far as leadership and service are concerned, then even the missionary personnel fall into that pattern of thinking..." Mrs. Whitten says.

"Sometimes," she continues, "women themselves fall victim to these centuries-old prejudices. They may believe that they cannot hope to occupy more than an incidental role on the mission field."

The life of a woman on the foreign mission field has long been one with more than its share of trials, prejudices and stereotypes, some women say; although most, at least, say there are setting benefits and positive factors.

Unlike her sisters of the 19th Century, today's woman missionary may work in any number of responsible areas--vocationally and geographically.

Most find some balance between home and outside work, like Frances (Mrs. Wayne J.) Fuller, who directs Baptist publications for Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. She is the mother of five teenagers and says she often "feels like two distinct people.

"The only way I can handle the responsibility is to confine it to certain hours of my day and be free of it when I go home," she says. Mrs. Fuller serves also as press representative of the Near East Baptist Mission, is chairman of the mission's language committee and is a member of the strategy committee.

Single missionary Cheryl Ray came to the mission in Zambia where the mission executive committee was made up solely of men. She frequently gets mail addressed to "C.L. Ray, Esq." There is a scarcity of available, single young men in Zambia, and cultural censure toward single women is strong.

Stress situations come all too often for a single woman alone and far from home. "But I manage and very well," Miss Ray declares. "And so do my single colleagues...I wouldn't trade my single life in His (God's) service for anything," she concludes.

Apparently, the will to survive and succeed in God's will sustains most, if not all, of Southern Baptists' foreign missionaries who are women.

They remain a vital part of the Christian world mission.



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November 5, 1975

Group Urges Evangelism;  
Speaks on Charismatics

74-75

AMARILLO, Tex. (BP)--Traditional issues and sticky social questions occupied the attention of 2,500 messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas' annual meeting here.

Ringling calls for evangelism were coupled with sticky social issues: the growing charismatic movement, the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion.

Speakers, such as Texas convention president, Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin and James H. Landes, executive secretary of the 2-million member organization, sounded the note of evangelism.

Smith called on Texas Baptists to win at least 100,000 converts to Christ during the coming church year, support the record-breaking budget and be missions minded.

Landes urged Baptists to involve themselves in the fight against gambling, obscenity, pornography, selfishness and racial snobbery.

Registered messengers to the 89th annual meeting also re-elected Smith to his second term as president of the convention, which includes 4,200 churches and missions across Texas, and adopted a record \$20.6 million budget commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget. Of that amount, 34.25 per cent will go to worldwide mission causes through the national SBC Cooperative Program.

In the resolutions area, messengers adopted a carefully worded statement on the charismatic movement which warns of potential dangers and called on individual Baptists "to act with great sensitivity lest the fabric of Christian fellowship be seriously impaired."

The adopted resolution was an adaptation of a stronger resolution which had called on churches who practice charismatic ministries to "voluntarily withdraw" from the fellowship if they cannot be in harmony with general Baptist doctrines.

The charismatic movement features emphasis on the so-called baptism in the Holy Spirit, with attendant glossalalia (speaking in tongues), faith healing and exorcism of evil spirits.

Messengers bypassed a question of the Equal Rights Amendment, referring it instead to the state convention's Christian Life Commission for further study, and passed a statement deploring widespread abortion.

A resolution calling on individual Baptists to forego at least one meal a week to help alleviate world hunger also passed unanimously. It was coupled with a Christian Life Commission statement which urged Christians to "reexamine their own eating habits in light of the fact 10-million people will die of starvation in 1975.

Texas Baptist involvement in Honduras--which was devastated by Hurricane Fifi, Sept. 19--also was spotlighted in the convention and in the Texas Baptist Men's Convention, which preceded it.

Mrs. Rosargentina Pindel de Smith, Honduras consul in San Antonio and a member of First Baptist Church there, appealed to Texas Baptists to "adopt" Honduras as a mission field.

Texas Baptists sent a mobile disaster relief unit to Honduras, currently set up in El Progreso, a banana plantation town which has about 11,000 homeless persons housed in schools and camps. Robert E. Dixon of Texas Baptist Men and John LaNoue, a former Texas Baptist, now with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department, have directed the relief unit's operation.

In internal affairs, Texas Baptists:

--Changed the name of Howard Payne College, Brownwood, Tex., to Howard Payne University;

--Heard an address by Jaroy Weber, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church of Lubbock, which sounded a call for evangelism as a solution to the world's problems;

--Voted to ask the convention's administration committee to study ways and means of obtaining additional funds to assist churches in building programs during the tight money times.

Next year's convention will be October 28-30 in Dallas.

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New York Convention  
Urges SBC Name Change

11/5/74

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (BP)--Registered messengers to the Baptist Convention of New York, meeting here, endorsed a name change for the Southern Baptist Convention and urged that the small, five-year-old convention be granted representation on SBC committees, boards and agencies.

In other action, messengers re-elected Fred Boehmer, pastor of Greenwich Baptist Church, Greenwich, Conn., as president; elected a woman, Mrs. DeLane Ryals of Glen Ridge, N.J., as a vice president; adopted a \$762,000 budget and honored their executive secretary-treasurer, Paul James, who will retire next March 1.

The resolution on the name change said the current SBC name "implies geographical attachments that are no longer valid for a convention which embraces and entire nation" (all 50 states).

"Historically and providentially our nation is in the process of breaking down racial cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social barriers," the resolution said, "and it behooves us who are committed to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to project a willingness to forsake human traditions--be they names or customs--whenever they present a hindrance to bringing any and all persons into a right relationship with God through Christ."

The resolution, which urged an SBC-appointed committee of seven now studying the name change to work toward a change which would reflect the New York convention's considerations, said further:

"A name change is always a traumatic experience... It affords us a unique opportunity to project the depth of our commitment to the gospel by sacrificing our traditional identity, precious as it is, in order to break down existing hindrances to spreading the gospel of Christ."

The representation request called for the SBC Executive Committee to "give immediate and serious consideration to revising its requirements for state convention representation on SBC boards and agencies."

Currently, bylaws stipulate that new states and territories may file application for representation on the SBC's Executive Committee, boards, commissions, standing committees and special committees when cooperating Baptist churches in a state or territory have 25,000 members--about 9,600 less than now in the New York convention, which covers all of New York state, the northern half of New Jersey and a small portion of Connecticut.

"Numerical strength alone does not always reflect the proper significance of an organization or group," the resolution said. "The creative and innovative ministries of churches within the Baptist Convention of New York territory have set the pace for many Southern Baptist Convention programs."

"It may be as many as five more years (under present bylaws) before our state convention is permitted an official voice in helping chart the course of our national body."

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The New York convention, one of the newer and smaller of the 33 state conventions affiliated with the 34,665-church, 12.3-million-member SBC, has 15,404 members in 150 congregations.

Another resolution declared that a resolution by last year's New York convention calling for broader ethnic representation on the body's boards and agencies, "still is not being effected on a fair and equitable basis."

This year's resolution, therefore, resolved to reaffirm "our desire that the gifts of all God's children in the BCNY be utilized" and asked that its "executive board and . . . committee on committees remain consistently aware of this need for broader representation along ethnic and cultural lines."

Another resolution urged the SBC Sunday School Board "to make an immediate market study" of Southern Baptist congregations in the New York and Pennsylvania-South Jersey conventions and in the New England states, estimate purchases from independent Christian bookstores, and "reconsider its requirements for the establishment of a Baptist Book Store" for the region.

The New York convention also urged its churches to recommit themselves to giving through the Cooperative Program unified budget by increasing gifts in 1975 and urged that New York convention Baptists assume a proportional part of the \$150 million dollar Cooperative Program goal for the calendar year, 1976, the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

Of the \$762,000 budget, New York convention churches will contribute \$204,000, with 20 per cent of that amount set aside for the national SBC Cooperative Program. The remainder of the \$762,000 will come from supplemental sources, such as the SBC Sunday School and Home Mission Boards.

James, who organized the first church in New York City affiliated with Southern Baptists and is the convention's first and only executive secretary, was honored for a ministry which has seen work in the area grow from three congregations 17 years ago, before the formation of a convention, to 150 congregations today.

A report to the New York convention indicated that a new church has been added every three months during the five years of an organized convention and that more than \$100,000 was given to missions by churches of the convention this past year.

Baptisms showed a gain of 16 per cent, rising from 1,130 last year to 1,340, and membership showed an 8.75 per cent increase, rising from 14,213 last year to 15,404 this year.

Next year's convention is set for Oct. 29-30 at Greenwich Baptist Church in Greenwich, Conn.

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Tennessee Black Baptists  
Oppose Flip Wilson Special

11/5/74

By W.A. Reed  
For Baptist Press

A statewide group of Tennessee's black Baptist pastors and lay persons has gone on record as opposing a recent Flip Wilson television special which they called "an insult to God and a breach of the Third Commandment."

The group is the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention (TBMEC), which met recently in Knoxville, Tenn. The TBMEC is affiliated with the six-million-member National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

A statement prepared by the Tennessee group's Pastor's Conference and passed by the TBMEC said:

"Our resentment has been growing ever since the character known as Rev. Leroy made his first appearance on the television screen. We were able to contain our resentment, however, until we viewed this recent television special.

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"This show was an insult to God and a breach of the Third Commandment which says, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God in vain.' It was a desecration of the Christian religion and a serious offense to the black church."

The convention statement asked that such television shows be discontinued and said, "To stereotype the black preacher as a sort of ecclesiastical Stepin' Fetchit' and the black church as a spiritual rock and roll center, would be tantamount to calling every president of the United States a coverup specialist and depicting the White House as the home of crooks."

The state black Baptists also said, "Let us make it very clear that we, the members of the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, representing more than a million black Baptists, are not defending the black religious experience as opposed to other religious bodies."

"A people's religious heritage is the life blood of their community and should not be caricatured for ridicule or economic gain, whether it be Jewish, Catholic or Protestant," it said.

Two paragraphs were addressed to Flip Wilson. They said, "Mr. Wilson should realize that the very organism which he is exploiting is responsible for his being on television for it was the black church which spearheaded the civil rights movement."

"Mr. Wilson should realize. . .to distort the image of the black church is to castrate the most potent force of responsible protest in America" and "to destroy the only living entity which is completely owned and operated by black Americans."

The church group went on to say: "We are not a bunch of long-faced, fire and brimstone fanatics who have no sense of humor."

"Our emotion-filled worship services should never be mistaken for comedy, hand-clapping, foot-patting; our verbal response to the preacher should never be labeled as a meaningless performance--we have something to get happy about, for our God has brought us a long way," they said.

The statement concluded:

"If you wish to present the black church in a more accurate fashion, we suggest that you reproduce the marches of Dr. Martin Luther King in Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma, for this would come closer to depicting our real image than would a bunch of mini-skirted girls doing the boogaloo in the choir stand."

"The history of the black church is one of three dimensions--liberation of the mind, body and soul and we suggest that in the future, the black church be presented in this manner." (BP)

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W. A. Reed is religion news editor for the Nashville Tennessean.

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#### CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 11/4/74, entitled Penn-Jersey Baptists Elect Frank Bowman, change Cherry Hill, N.H. to read: Cherry Hill, N.J. in line 2 of graph 3.

Thanks.

--Baptist Press