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Editor's note: David Y.K. Wong, Baptist World Alliance president, has just returned from visiting the People's Republic of China for three weeks. This is the first visit of a Baptist official to the mainland since the late 1940s. Wong, a native of Wuchow, China, moved in 1949 from Canton to Hong Kong, where he is an architectural engineer. Wong filed this report to the BWA Washington office.

**BWA President Reports
On Visit to China**

By David Y.K. Wong
President, Baptist World Alliance

HONG KONG (BP)--For a long time I have felt that it would be good for me to visit China and see first hand some of the changes that have taken place in recent years. This feeling was reinforced after my election to the presidency of the Baptist World Alliance in July. Many people have asked me how I, as a Chinese, feel about China, the country of my birth.

My travel schedule was arranged by the China Travel Service. They were courteous and helpful at all times. I was cleared for a three week tour of three cities in South China, Canton, Amoy and Swatow. When I crossed the border at Shum Chun, a man awaiting my arrival escorted me past lines of people directly to the customs inspection desk. As he inspected my luggage, an officer spotted the Chinese Bible in my suitcase. He picked it up and leafed through it. He began to read it, and after a minute or two he handed it back to me without a word. I put it back in my suitcase and boarded the train for Canton.

When I was in Canton, I stayed in the Overseas Chinese hostel with Chinese who were returning from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. For three days, I rode all over the city on buses and pedicabs and in small rented motor cars. It was most interesting to visit the former Lingnam University (now Chung Shan University), the former Chung Shan University at nearby Sek-pai, the former Pui Ching and Pui To schools, and the Pui Ling kindergarten. All these schools now operate under different names. I visited the Christian cemetery, and several parks and places we used to go when I was a young man.

I left Canton and took the train for Amoy, where I saw the famous Amoy University, industrial towns, communes and farms in the area. From Amoy, I took a bus to Swatow and from there I flew back to Canton.

People could tell at a glance by my clothes that I was an overseas Chinese who had come back for a visit. I was received warmly everywhere I went. The government has encouraged a spirit of friendliness towards outsiders, concentrating on two slogans from the writings of Chairman Mao: "Serve the people" and "Friendship first; competition second."

When I stopped to take pictures of the Pearl River bridge and a nearby park, children laughed and crowded around and curious passersby stopped to watch with fascination. I invited them to get in the pictures with me. They were absolutely delighted, and when I extended my hands they responded immediately and joyously. One of the boys called, "Friendship first!" Everyone laughed and greeted me as a true friend.

As an engineer, I noticed that a great deal of progress has taken place in the development of communications systems, including road building and railway construction. I saw pictures of interior railways between Chengtu and Kuonming and Kweiyuen and Chungking. The government is also pushing the development of land for agricultural development. On the 10 hour bus trip from Amoy to Swatow, I saw about 10 different places where thousands of people were digging the hillsides to form terraces for agricultural plantations. How do they get water for the irrigation of these arid plateaus? They build miles and miles of viaducts across the deep valleys and canyons. These viaducts and water channels are built of cut stone, and closely resemble the Roman viaducts in Italy, Greece, and other places.

Many tall brick chimneys dot the countryside, sending up smoke from small village factories. It is amazing to see the great variety of items produced in this way, everything from beautiful porcelain ware to bicycles. Bicycles are much sought after. There are about 700,000 bicycles in Canton, a city with three million inhabitants.

Everything--including farms, factories, shoe stores, and barber shops--is owned and operated by the government directly or through a cooperative system. The difference in salary between skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled laborers is not large. The pedicab drivers keep 70 per cent of the money they make, and give 30 per cent to the government. A pedicab driver averages 60-80 dollars per month. Food prices are low.

Pedicab drivers told me that medical clinics are everywhere. When workers get sick they receive free examinations, free treatment and free medicine. They also receive sick pay amounting to the minimum cost of food and basic necessities. This is the same for all workers. Retired workers receive 70 per cent of their salary in social security type payments.

Family planning is widely practiced. Newly married couples are advised to plan for a maximum of two children. The government has set a minimum age for marriage: 24 for women, 27 for men. This rule can be bent slightly, providing that the sum of the ages of both parties is at least 50.

Considering the entire situation, China has come a long way! The nation has achieved greater participation by the majority of the people in decisions affecting their daily lives. Health care facilities, food production and communications have been vastly improved. The status and role of women has been continuously improved.

I must add that, in conversations with people both young and old, I detected a hunger and longing for something more than material benefits.

The revised constitution of the People's Republic of China says "a citizen has freedom of religion." However, he also has freedom of anti-religion, freedom to make propaganda for atheism. Because of this clause, some people gather around the temples and ridicule the worshippers.

I decided to take a look at former church buildings, and I visited several that were known to me. All of them have been put to use as factories, schools, or people's assembly halls. I made an unsuccessful attempt to contact former preachers and pastors and church leaders. It is said that a church operates in Peking, and possibly in Shanghai, conducting services on Sunday mainly for foreigners. If a tour group wishes to hold a service on Sunday in a hotel, permission is required and usually granted. I also heard that the former Nanking Theological Seminary started some classes a few years ago.

Several years ago, I heard about a Chinese Christian who was sick in bed. She told a friend that she tried to say the Lord's Prayer, but she couldn't remember all the words. She said that she felt comforted and blessed even though she only said part of it. I wrote out the entire prayer in Chinese so that her friend could take it to her. There is a hunger for God's word in China. Bibles are largely unobtainable. There are still Christian people in China in spite of this. I met and talked with several of them when I was there. Many told me they pray morning, noon and night.

I heard about a young worker who had a tremendous conversion experience. He reacted with anger whenever he heard about the Christian faith. One day he surprised the other Christians when he announced that he had come to believe in God and accept Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. He is now a radiant witness for Christ. During recent years, the government has enlisted young people to work in the countryside. One young Christian told me that as they go out to the countryside, so goes the gospel of Jesus Christ. He said that in some remote areas there are growing numbers of Christian people.

I went to see an old Christian friend, now retired. When I said goodby to her, she wished me good luck. I held her hand and said, "May God bless you." I could see a change come over her face, a sudden enlightened expression. She was deeply moved, and clasped my hand tightly. She said, "That is what I need." I said, "We are praying for you Christians in China." It was a beautiful moment.

As Christians, what should we do? How can we witness to the 800 million people in China? They are educated to a new ideology which seems to be helping to overcome poverty. It has brought them a strong sense of independence, self determination and self reliance. They take great pride in these virtues.

The church must develop new methods of outreach to communicate in effective, relevant ways. I believe that God will show us this new way as we wait on him. The door will definitely open, but it will be opened from the inside. Let us pray that when that day comes, we will be prepared to respond in creative new ways as God himself leads and directs.



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Beirut Missionaries
Stay in Troubled Land

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--At last report six Southern Baptist missionaries and two Southern Baptist volunteers had elected to remain in Beirut in spite of the American consul's advice that nonessential persons evacuate Lebanon.

Three others still in Beirut were making tentative travel plans.

The seminary there, with eight students, is still in operation. Missionary personnel say they will probably remain as long as seminary studies can continue and food is obtainable.

"The ultimate decision about whether to leave has been left to the missionaries," said J. D. Hughey, area secretary for Europe and the Middle East for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "They have been asked to consider seriously the advisability of leaving and have been assured that they have the full support of the board in whatever decision they make."

Remaining to teach in the seminary are missionaries Mr. and Mrs. David W. King, Mr. and Mrs. Finlay M. Graham and William O. Hern. Also remaining at the seminary are volunteers Mrs. Ann Pfander and Miss Isabelle McLelland. James K. Ragland has also remained, but the Beirut Baptist School he directs is closed.

The seminary is on the side of a hill in a residential section which is relatively quiet. However, the seminary was hit by two stray rockets early in October, resulting in little damage and no injuries.

Left-wing Muslim and right-wing Christian para-military units have been fighting each other, with many innocent persons caught in the cross fire. Political kidnappings, bombings and murders have been numerous.

Missionaries and mission personnel have remained unscathed according to Hughey, although they have been very close to the violence. A school bus from the American Community School, attended by missionaries' children until it closed, was fired upon.

Several missionaries assigned to Lebanon are in America, and others are working or doing language studies in Jordan.

The old hospital building in Ajloun, Jordan, is being prepared to temporarily house any Lebanese Baptists and others who might choose to evacuate. As of this report there is no known injury to Baptists or Baptist property.

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Tennessee Baptists Name
Editor Search Committee

Baptist Press
10/30/75

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--A search committee has been named to seek an editor for the Baptist and Reflector, state newspaper of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Since the resignation of James A. Lester two years ago, Mrs. Eura Lannom has served as acting editor. A staff member of the paper for 32 years, Mrs. Lannom was assistant to the editor when Lester resigned.

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O. M. Dangeau, chairman of the Tennessee Convention's administrative committee, which also serves as the Baptist and Reflector's board of directors, named J. Ralph McIntyre, pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga, as chairman. Others are James A. Canady, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Johnson City; John R. Churchman, pastor of Manley Baptist Church, Morristown; James G. McCluskey, pastor of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church, Knoxville; Gaye L. McGlothlin, retired pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Nashville; Carroll C. Owen, pastor of First Baptist Church, Paris; Clarence K. Stewart, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pulaski; and Dangeau, ex officio, pastor of First Baptist Church, McKenzie.

The committee invites suggestions on candidates for the post.

Earlier, Richard David Keel, circulation manager of the Baptist and Reflector since 1961, announced his resignation to accept the associate pastorate of Clarkston Baptist Church, Clarkston, Ga.

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Rioting Mob in Ecuador
Disrupts Baptist Service

Baptist Press
10/30/75

CANAR, Ecuador (BP)--Some 40 people were wounded here when a rioting mob of about 80 rock-throwing, machete-wielding Indians interrupted a church service held by Southern Baptist Missionary Archie V. Jones in a small village outside Canar.

Three persons were hospitalized and one is not expected to live, according to reports from missionaries.

Jones and five members of the First Baptist Church, Cuenca, accepted the invitation of a villager, who is a new Christian, to hold a service in his home.

After the service had begun, the Indians showed up outside screaming and throwing rocks, with the determination to burn the house down, according to Barbara (Mrs. Richard D.) Clement, Southern Baptist missionary.

When a number of the believers and sympathizers went outside to try and calm the crowd, a big fight began. Rocks and machetes were used. Jones and a member from the Cuenca Church managed to escape. They ran to their van parked outside the village and summoned help from the police.

The police returned and arrested the mob leaders, but in the meantime about 40 were wounded.

According to reports from Ecuador, the scene was caused by the local Roman Catholic priest who feared evangelicals would move into his territory.

Soon after the encounter, Jones alerted Miguel Veloz, president of the Baptist Convention of Ecuador, who sent telegrams to the president of Ecuador and the governor of Canar Province. Jones cabled the Roman Catholic Pope, explaining the actions of the local priest.

"Clashes of this magnitude are not typical," said J. Bryan Brasington, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Western South America. "They are limited mostly to rural areas. Generally we have had a very good working relationship with the Catholic Church in most areas of Western South America."

Jones believes the wide publicity in Ecuador being given to the incident may enable them to return to the area at a later date.

Earlier, Jones had baptized 13 people at the Cuenca Church. The villager, who invited Jones to hold the service, was among these 13 people. Two brothers, Manuel Jesus and Manuel Maria Pingil Loja, were primarily responsible for introducing the 13 people to Christ.

The two brothers had become Christians over a year ago, early one morning on the way to work. They had heard about Christ from a message on a Trans-World Radio Broadcast from Bon Aire, Dutch West Indies.

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Afterwards, they had located a Baptist congregation near where they live and work in the Guayas Province and had been baptized. In frequent visits to their home near the Canar Province, the brothers would talk with friends and relatives about their faith, according to Southern Baptist Missionary Stanley D. Stamps. Soon there were 13 people awaiting baptism.

Jones baptized the 13 new believers in a special service at the Cuenca Church. It is reported that there are still others waiting to be baptized.

The new converts hope to establish a chapel in a central location, since most of them speak the Quechua language and the services in Cuenca are in Spanish, according to Stamps.

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Baptist-Catholic Dialogue
Sparks Mutual Understanding

Baptist Press
10/30/75

By C. B. Hastings

MENLO PARK, Calif. (BP)--Points of mutual understanding, as well as difference, crystallized here in a face to face encounter of Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics, including some who were experiencing such a meeting of minds for the first time.

Some 25 Southern Baptists and 25 Roman Catholics, in a three-day conference at Vallombrosa Retreat Center, dealt with such questions as: "How do you understand conversion to Christ and Christian growth in the Spirit?", "What does prayer mean to you?", "What spiritual movements are happening in your area?", "What are the social outcomes of your understanding of the Good News of Jesus Christ?"

The conference, a fourth in a series of leaders' talks, was sponsored jointly by the department of inter-faith witness at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, and the National Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops' committee on inter-religious affairs, Washington, D. C. Other dialogues have been held since 1971 in Florida, Texas and Maryland.

"We Roman Catholics need to continue to hear your Baptist witness to personal conversion to Christ," said Bishop Bernie F. Law of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau diocese in Missouri. "We believe Roman Catholics also have something important to say to Baptists about the Church as a world-wide communion of believers."

Richard Cunningham, professor of theology at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., and Thomas A. Franceour, chairman of the department of Catholic studies at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, delivered major addresses focused on the conference theme, "Conversion to Christ and Christian Growth in the Spirit."

Their diverse views sparked such great interest that participants added an additional two hours of dialogue with the two speakers.

Cunningham developed the Baptist perspective on conversion and Christian growth around "personal faith."

"The starting point and determining element of all Baptist thought," he said, "is the personal character of the faith, which centers upon the personal relationship between a responsible person and God through faith in Jesus Christ."

He did not claim that Baptists are the only ones to interpret conversion as personal faith. The uniqueness of Baptists is "their consistency in applying the demands for personal Christianity to their understanding of the Christian life, the structuring of the church and the situation of the church in the world," he said.

Cunningham went on to say that this viewpoint, "explains and ties together the many apparent disparate views and practices on salvation, the church, baptism, the sacraments (which Baptists usually call ordinances), Christian growth, the priesthood of the believer, the freedom of the individual before the New Testament, universal Christian education, separation of church and state and missions and evangelism.

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Franceour said, "I belong to the school of thought that emphasizes the God within us rather than the God over against us." In defining the theme from his viewpoint as a Roman Catholic, he said, "Conversion does not say to me that there is a moving from wickedness to goodness, but a slow developing process whereby we gradually move toward membership in a kingdom of love community."

He sees the conversion of the child as a gradual turning to God, an awakening. "In the work of conversion, from the very beginning of life, the Father, working within us, makes himself known and we gradually respond."

In the discussion period, Catholics questioned the Baptists, particularly at the point of Baptist insistence that their conversion is a once for all event. Cunningham replied that conversion would be misunderstood unless it is set within the larger context of salvation as presented in the New Testament.

"Conversion," he said, "is the observable change that corresponds to the inward regeneration of the believer and is the event which opens up a life-long experience of salvation. Conversion is something that has happened. The believer can say, 'I have been saved.' Baptists believe that the reception of salvation begins with regeneration and the reception of the Holy Spirit in that experience."

He indicated that the 1963 Statement of Baptist Faith and Message correctly interprets the teachings of the New Testament that the first experience of salvation "continues in a growth in grace, which Baptists usually refer to as sanctification, and that it is a goal in which the believer will be perfected in eternity."

Baptists questioned Catholics at the point of not taking seriously the New Testament view of sin as rebellion of the will which necessitates a new birth experience. Franceour replied that he saw the new birth as being a continuing or repeated created act of God within life.

Six discussion groups occupied the further schedule dealing with the churches ministry to youth, the effect upon American Christianity of small group movements, the child's religious experience, the charismatic movement, the prayer life of Baptists and Catholics and the gospel and social concerns.

The retreat master and host at Vallombrosa, Father Warren Halloran spoke in the concluding discussion of his experience in confirmation. "It was exactly what Dr. Cunningham described in his experience of conversion, I felt I was invaded by the Spirit and my life was taken over by him," he said.

One of the Catholic women remarked in a discussion on baptism that if she could have her decision on the baptism of her child to do over, she would like to wait until he was older in order that it might be a more meaningful experience.

One of the Baptist superintendents of missions remarked, "I am discovering that in spite of our differences, Baptists and Catholics have a foundation on which to debate these issues. We are closer together in our view of the inerrancy of the Bible than we are in any other groups."

The major addresses and reports of the group meetings are being published by the two sponsoring groups.