



BAPTIST PRESS

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78-52

**Soviet Baptist Dilemma
Surfaces in Indianapolis**

By Robert O'Brien

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--A philosophical debate as ancient as First Century Christianity and as modern as the concerns of picketers in front of the Indiana Convention Exposition Center surfaced during the Second World Conference of Baptist Men in Indianapolis.

As 1,000 delegates from 43 countries met inside the center, the picketers, led by Greg Dixon, pastor of the independent Baptist Temple in Indianapolis, paraded peacefully outside distributing literature.

They urged delegates to the meeting, sponsored by the Men's Department of the Baptist World Alliance, to pray for Baptists imprisoned in the Soviet Union, and they charged communists were influencing the Baptist World Alliance, which has Russian Baptists in its membership.

The picketers, who scheduled fundamentalist preacher Carl McIntyre to run a competing "Freedom Rally" at Baptist Temple on the third night of the BWA meeting, decried the cooperation of the BWA with leadership of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the group of Baptist believers recognized and registered by the Soviet government.

They alleged that the BWA, to which the official Soviet Baptist body belongs, keeps silent about persecution of dissident Baptists in the Soviet Union who refuse to register with the government and who have split from the recognized group.

Particular targets of their allegations were Alexei Bichkov, the All-Union Council general secretary and BWA General Council member, and Michael Zhidkov, senior pastor of the Moscow Baptist Church and BWA vice president and General Council member. They accused them of being communists and agents of the KGB, the Soviet secret police.

Bichkov and Zhidkov, nor any other Russian Baptists, attended the meeting. BWA leaders said they had no indication they ever intended to come. Dixon and McIntyre claimed at the rally, attended by about 900 persons, that the protests of the independent Baptist church had frightened them off.

(Speakers at the rally made only passing reference to the Russian Baptists, devoting most of their time to speeches against communism in general and "eroding freedoms" in America.)

Baptist World Alliance officials declare that they have every reason to believe that Bichkov and Zhidkov are not communist agents "but are our brothers in Christ." They also disagree that the BWA has kept silent on human rights.

Robert S. Denny, BWA general secretary, said the BWA has concern for Baptists in all the world, including the Soviet Union. He said that BWA leaders work directly with representatives of governments to ease restrictions on people who suffer persecution and discrimination, rather than to make loud public protests.

"The BWA supports no ideological system and works for human dignity and rights in many areas of the world. We have made direct contacts with officials of a number of governments," he said.

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The controversy surrounds the decision of dissident Soviet Baptists to defy such Soviet laws as those which call for registration with the government, and the decision on the part of All-Union Council members to work within the confines of Soviet law.

Some close observers of the situation compare the conflict in the Soviet Union, which has pitted brother against brother and Christian against Christian, with similar turmoil in the early Christian church.

First Century Christians, as have Christians down through history, had to decide whether to cooperate with the government of Rome or risk its wrath--and subsequent persecution--by defying laws they thought infringed upon their prerogatives as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

At the issue were Biblical admonitions which call for both support of secular government and refusal to let man's law abridge God's law.

That situation exists today in the Soviet Union, according to some close observers of the scene. Equally genuine Christians differently interpret how to respond to the Soviet law.

Hardliners, exercising traditional Baptist protest against state domination of religion, declare that real Christians will become martyrs and that such organizations as the Baptist World Alliance should speak vociferously. Others, equally rooted in Baptist tradition, feel that they should cooperate and thus keep their churches open. They feel that hardline public jawboning by the BWA would hurt the organization's direct efforts to help dissident Soviet Baptists.

Some close observers also recognize that discrimination against Christians does exist in the Soviet environment, despite Soviet laws which specify religious freedom. Christians find it hard to get jobs, get promotions, or secure an education.

Some have compared the situation to the civil rights problems in the United States in the 1960s when blacks had to fight subtle discrimination in society, despite laws which supported their rights. But the situation, apparently, runs much deeper than that in the Soviet Union.

As for Bichkov and Zhidkov, Soviet Baptists who have elected to fulfill their ministry within the laws of their country, many observers say that they, even though genuine Christians, can't be candid about their opinions on government actions.

"If they did," said one person close to the situation, "they would lose their ability to accomplish as much as they do."

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Men Must Open Themselves
To Have Impact, Mathis Says

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
4/10/78

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Men must develop a willingness not to suppress the sensitive, open, vulnerable aspects of their nature--the so-called feminine qualities--if they want to have the same impact women have had on worldwide Christian missions, a woman's mission leader said in Indianapolis.

Marie Mathis of Waco, Texas, pausing between sessions of the Second World Conference of Baptist Men after addressing some 1,000 participants from 43 countries, reflected on why women have historically been a greater energizing force in missions than men.

"Men work--and are busy; I know that," said the international president of the Women's Department of the Baptist World Alliance, "but the working woman is becoming more and more of a reality also."

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"Women are not ashamed to do something small, if that's all they can do. Each small contribution adds up. Men tend to want to do something big--or nothing at all."

Women are more sensitive to need, more willing to show emotion, more willing to be open and vulnerable and receptive to the intangibles of the kingdom of God, she contended.

Men tend more toward denying their vulnerability and shying away from emotion, continued the veteran woman's leader, who served 10 years as president of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and will complete 10 years in the Baptist World Alliance post in 1980.

However, Mrs. Mathis said she senses that subtle changes in society are beginning to liberate men from their macho attitude and allow them to show more emotion and respond more with their hearts than their image of themselves.

Mrs. Mathis cited another reason men around the world don't accomplish what women do in giving, prayer and dedication. "Men don't have the propeller we have in our Baptist Women's Day of Prayer (which falls on the first Monday in November each year)."

An offering taken on the day of prayer finances women's meetings around the world, energizing women to return home "and have a leavening effect"--to give, pray and minister to physical and spiritual need and influence their churches--and their men--to do the same.

She noted also that women, unlike men, don't need meetings with big name personalities and fanfare to build attendance. Women are more willing to give of themselves and come together for inspiration and prayer, Mrs. Mathis added.

In performing Jesus Christ's command to spread his message around the world, men are better suited than women to take the lead, declared Mrs. Mathis, who has been a powerful and dynamic force in spearheading worldwide ministries for women for almost 40 years.

"Women really want men to take the lead," she said. "Most are willing to step back and let men lead when they will. I don't think most women would over react to men leading despite the modern trend toward women's rights movements."

The Equal Rights Amendment has not had much effect on the women's missions movement, continued Mrs. Mathis, who has directed the Student Union at Baylor University in Waco since 1948.

"Most women I know don't worry about the ERA. They can do what they want to without it. Most women I know don't care about it. They're turned off by militancy such as we saw at the International Women's Year meeting in Houston."

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Christ Crushes Bigotry
Jerry Clower Declares

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
4/10/78

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Country comic Jerry Clower told over 1,000 Baptists from 43 countries that bigotry vanished from his life when he became a Christian.

"I was raised a bigot and a racist," said the 280-pound, Mississippi-born Grand Ole Opry star. "I used to be a bigot, but good! But with Jesus Christ as my saviour, my conscience started pricking my Christian convictions," said Clower, "and I couldn't live with what I felt, and I changed. And that's the difference that Jesus makes in your life."

Speaking at the Second World Conference of Baptist Men, Clower added, "Anyone who has a closed-door policy for just white Christians, or just yellow Christians or just black Christians, I've got news for them. They can go rake all their prayers off the ceiling, 'cause God never heard nothin' they ever said."

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"There ain't no such thing as an all-white Christian nothin'; ther ain't no such thing as an all-black Christian nothin'. If it's Christian, it's Christian, " said Clower. "And if you're born again, you're my brother, and if you don't lik it, talk to God about it, cause there ain't nothin' you can do about it."

Clower, who rose from an unknown Mississippi fertilizer salesman to become the leading country comic for five years in a row, is nationally known for his television appearances and record albums. He is the only non-musician to be inducted into the Grand Ole Opry.

While he is quick to admit that he enjoys all the accomplishments of his work, Clower says, "I think the greatest thing is to witness for Jesus."

Clower gave the delegates five suggestions for Christian living: "Be sure you're saved" ... "join a New Testament, Bible-believing church" ... "go every time the doors are open" ... "systematically tithe your income to the church" ... "and if tragedy hits your life, don't act like a pagan, act like a Christian."

Clower, who sprinkles his Christian testimony with humorous stories of his boyhood in Yazoo City, Miss., says, "I'm convinced there is just one place where there ain't no laughter, and that is hell. And I've made arrangements to miss hell!"

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Pastors and Laymen Need To
Heal Divisions, Scott Says

By Roy Jennings

Baptist Press
4/10/78

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Don't expect your preacher to sweat if you're constantly pouring ice cubes on him.

That was the advice that Manuel L. Scott, the fiery pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Los Angeles, gave to 1,000 delegates to the Second World Conference of Baptist Men at the Indiana Convention Exposition Center.

Encouraged by a constant chorus of "Amen" and "Preach On," the bantam-sized black pastor told the laymen that "you're going to have to put more into your pastor if you want to get more out of him."

Scott, who accented his address with violent flourishes and a series of dance steps to the delight of the conferees, made several suggestions about how to insure harmony between pastors and their people.

Besides supporting the preacher, the lay people need to recognize that the pastor has a unique call from God to a distinctive vocation as well as a call to a church, Scott reminded.

Finally, the laity should begin participating in the preaching, through attentive listening, staying awake, praying for their preacher and sharing their faith, Scott added.

"Many preachers turn into acrobats and develop voices that sound like atomic explosions just to keep the people awake."

Chiding the white delegates for their reserve, Scott said they need to start giving their preachers "feedback" like the black people do. "Feedback has been hammered out in the black culture and I hope some of you catch it. You know that saying 'Amen' to a preacher is like saying 'sic-em' to a dog."

Scott, who got a standing ovation at the close, opened his address by acknowledging that "It's no secret that all of the rifts which run down the middle of local churches and larger fellowships are between the pastor and the people." And the lay people aren't the only ones to blame, Scott added.

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"Far too many preachers try to take away the rights and powers of the people, and far too many preachers are dictatorial, undemocratic, arrogant, authoritarian, and Pharisaic. If we are going to have a partnership between the pastor and his people, the pastor will have to adapt himself to the style of the ministry of his people."

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Wrapup

**Men Urged to Dedicate Energy
To World Evangelism And Need**

By Roy Jennings

**Baptist Press
4/10/78**

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Baptist men from 43 countries were challenged in Indianapolis to put aside bigotry, racism, and differences with the clergy and to dedicate their skills to evangelizing the world and filling human need.

A battery of speakers from a dozen countries and representing the pulpit and the pew exhorted the 1,000 delegates to the Second World Conference of Baptist Men to demonstrate openness, sensitivity, and dedicated leadership in communicating the gospel to others.

Owen Cooper, secretary of the Baptist World Alliance Men's Department which sponsored the conference, keynoted the conference on opening night with a plea to the men to find their individual gift, sharpen it, and to use it to help fill the spiritual and physical needs of others.

Addressing himself to a multitude of spiritual and physical ills which beset the world, Cooper, retired president of Mississippi Chemical Corp, world's largest ammonium fertilizer manufacturing cooperative, reminded the men they were at the conference because they were commissioned as born-again believers to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

C. Ronald Goulding, associate secretary of BWA with responsibility for evangelism and education, urged the men to agree to win one person each to Jesus Christ in 1978.

"Some of you may win 20 to 30 to Christ. Some of you may not even try. Set your heart on one person so that when next year comes, you will have been the vehicle through which God has worked."

Gerald L. Borchert, dean and professor of New Testament at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lombard, Ill., said, "The greatest problem on the horizon seems to be an attempt by some Christians to define the role of God and the Bible according to the box in which they live. God has often broken man's preconception of how God operates. When it comes to witnessing, we better be prepared to show some flexibility."

Country comic Jerry Clower of Yazoo City, Miss., decried bigotry and racism while offering his formula for the Christian life--accept Christ, join a New Testament, Bible-believing church, attend services regularly, tithe, and show Christian confidence during tragedy.

The lone woman speaker, Marie Mathis of Waco, Texas, said men need to develop a willingness to avoid suppressing the sensitive, open, vulnerable aspects of their nature if they expect to have the same impact on worldwide Christian missions that women have.

"Women are not ashamed to do something small, if that's all they can do. Men tend to want to do something big, or nothing at all," said Mrs. Mathis, international president of the Woman's Department of BWA and former president of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Mrs. Mathis said she sensed that subtle changes in society are beginning to liberate men from their macho attitude and allow them to show more emotion and respond more with their hearts.

The need for oneness of spirit among men in the pulpit and the pew was sounded by Glendon McCullough, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Manuel Scott, black pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Los Angeles, Calif.

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McCullough warned that Baptists around the world are in danger of building a clergy hierarchy which creates a false division between the minister in the pulpit and the minister in the pew.

"The minister in the pew must have a 'hands-on' experience rather than a spectator aloofness," he said. "Every Christian must work at discipleship. Everyone must share the spiritual as well as the housekeeping chores that go along with the main event."

Scott, while urging the men not to "pour ice cubes" on their pastor but support him, also urged pastors to adapt themselves to their people and avoid taking away their rights and acting "dictatorial, undemocratic, arrogant, authoritarian, and pharasaic."

Burton Andrews, executive director of American Baptist Men, Valley Forge, Pa., chose the principle that ministry applies to the laity as well as the professional clergy.

"Christianity has been moved increasingly forward by laymen who are expressing their Christianity in their lives," he said.

The plea for faithful, dedicated men was issued by Ernest Kofele Martin, president of the Cameroon Baptist Convention in West Africa. The very foundations of the Christian church will collapse "if we fail to share in the task that confronts the church of our Lord Jesus Christ," he said.

In a closing address, David Y. K. Wong, a Hong Kong architect and president of BWA, painted a bleak picture of the world but offered a solution.

"We know that this is an age of tension and fear. Nations are deeply divided. We are living in the most far reaching era of change that the world has ever known," Wong said. "Faced with a situation such as this, it is a temptation to take shelter and hide in the shade of a juniper tree like Elijah did. But we can not run from life and its problems. We must face our problems and deal with them in faith."

Francis A. Dennis, Liberian ambassador to the United States and Canada, described Christianity as a great moral force that's changing and improving society, helping men to be more worthy, more socially useful and responsible.

The ideal Christian is one who freely mingles with life and feels it an abiding mission of the God he serves to help lift mankind to a better, fuller and more rewarding life, the ambassador said. "Today, there is an even greater need for actual Christian involvement in trying to help lift mankind to a better and nobler life."

Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, expressed concern for men who "give God a shoddy substitute for themselves" and who have lost touch with God in the midst of feverish activity for the church. Christians who lose their feel for the presence and immediacy of God will become burned out cases who cannot be used by Him to cut through the evil, hostility, hatred and injustices in the world, he said.

Stephen Steeves of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, chairman of the BWA Men's Department, summarized the conference with the reminder that Baptist men around the world are reawakening to the importance of the church and are expressing a willingness to become involved.

The only ripple on the conference waters came when 150 Indianapolis fundamentalists picketed several sessions, urging prayer for imprisoned Soviet Baptists and declaring that two Soviet Baptist leaders, who didn't even come to the meeting, were communist agents. They scheduled a competing "Freedom Rally" featuring fundamentalist preacher, Carl McIntyre, on the third night of the five-day conference.

The Russian Baptists they opposed were Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and BWA General Council member, and Michael Zhidkov, senior pastor of Moscow Baptist Church and BWA vice president and General Council member. BWA leaders responded that they have every reason to believe that the two Russian Baptists are not communist agents "but are our brothers in Christ."

1,300 Attend National
Baptist Student Retreat

By Linda Lawson

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--More than 1,300 students participating in the 33rd National Baptist Student Retreat were challenged to expand work with black students on their campuses.

Breaking the previous attendance record of 975, the conference met at Knox College and the Hyatt Regency in Knoxville, Tenn.

John Corbitt, national director of the retreat, appealed to students to begin Baptist Student Unions on black campuses which presently have none. "The National Baptist Student Union is one of the fastest growing Christian movements on the college campus," Corbitt said.

On campuses where BSUs are primarily reaching white students, Corbitt said leaders should consider starting a black student fellowship within the BSU. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, was the first campus to begin a black student fellowship, and now more than 100 black students participate.

Ed Wheeler of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, delivered the keynote speech. Both the Home Mission Board and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's National Student Ministries provided support for the retreat.

Bonnie McRay, Coahoma Junior College, Clarksdale, Miss., was chosen Miss National BSU in the pageant which annually highlights the retreat. Kenneth Coachman, Miles College, Fairfield, Ala., was elected president.

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Southern Baptists Get
7 National RPRC Awards

Baptist Press
4/10/78

HOUSTON (BP)--United Methodist communicators won 10 awards, the top number of awards in the 1978 Hinkhouse-DeRose Awards competition of the Religious Public Relations Council, with Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics tying for second, with seven each.

The national interfaith competition's five top best-in-class awards, which included a plaque and a \$100 check each, went to Floyd A. Craig of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Nashville, public relations class, for his "Help for Television Viewers" campaign; Robert O'Brien, news editor, Baptist Press, Nashville, writing class, for news reporting on "The KCIA Connection;" Charles DeVries, American Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, audio-visual class, for motion picture, "How Good Can Life Be;" Eugene A. Schneider, United Church of Christ, New York, N. Y., broadcast class, for television series, "Six American Families--the Pasciak Family;" and Mary Ruth Coffman, United Methodists, Nashville, print class, for magazine, "Alive Now."

Southern Baptists winning awards included Craig, three (first places in public relations and photography categories and the best-in-class award); O'Brien, 2 (first place in news writing category and best-in-class award); J. C. Durham, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, first place in videotape category; and Frank H. Olsen of Dallas, first place in TV spot category for a project for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth.

Top individual award winner was Schneider, who collected five. His denomination, the United Church of Christ, was third in total awards, with six.

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RPRC Cites Secular Media

HOUSTON (BP)--Three newspapers, three magazines and a national radio network news department received national awards for excellence in religion coverage at the 49th annual meeting of the Religious Public Relations Council in Houston.

Bruce Buursma of the "Louisville (Ky.) Courier Journal," and Carrie LaBriella of the "Dayton (Ohio) Journal-Herald" were named "fellows" of the RPRC and their papers received Awards of Merit. The "Newport News (Va.) Time-Herald" also received an Award of Merit.

"U. S. News & World Report," "Redbook" and "Philadelphia" magazine also received Awards of Merit, as did NBC Radio's network news.

In other developments related to recognition of news media, RPRC passed resolutions lauding Bob Bell Jr., who will step down May 24, after 27 years as church news editor of the Nashville Banner, and George Dugan, who retired recently after more than 30 years writing and editing religion news for the New York Times, and praised their papers for their handling of religion news.

Each year RPRC, a national, interfaith organization of religious communicators, honors secular media for outstanding coverage of religion.

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Trough Works For Baptistry

CRAIGMONT, Idaho (BP)--The baptistry in the Prairie Baptist Church hadn't been used in seven years-- it leaked--until an enterprising church member stuck a horse trough into the available space.

The trough is filled with a garden hose connected to a faucet in the restroom. But like the original baptistry, the water heater doesn't always work just right. When the water is too hot, a little snow in the tub by the inventive church members cools it fine.

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What Should He Tell His Church?

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--When students hold an auction to raise money for summer missions and seminary faculty donate most of the items up for bids, there is no telling what may happen.

Recently such an auction was held at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. After a furious round of bidding, one student pastor discovered that he had acquired the services of Old Testament professor Clyde T. Francisco for a weekend revival.

Such items as the seminary president's 13-year-old motorbike (\$150), a tennis match with a theology professor (\$7.50), and a professor-piloted flight over Louisville (\$45) helped raise more than \$700 for the student missions program.

But after the auction was over, one student had a problem.

Scratching his head, he wondered aloud, "How can I explain to my church that I 'bought' our revival speaker at an auction for \$125?"

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