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86-31

Worldwide Decline Reported  
 In Urban Christian Strength

By Art Toalston

**RICHMOND, Va. (BP)**—The population explosion has "completely outstripped" evangelism in the world's urban areas, says missions researcher David Barrett.

Barrett is the author of "World-Class Cities and World Evangelization," a pioneering study of Christianity in cities with more than one million people. The study recently was released by New Hope, a publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

A 30-year Anglican missionary and researcher, Barrett has been based in Kenya during much of his career but now is at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board under a three-year contract.

Christianity in urban areas has "suffered a marked and progressive decline throughout this century," he says. Churches are "fast losing the battle for the cities."

For example, 17 of the world's 25 largest cities will be non-Christian by the year 2000, just 14 years from now, Barrett says. Nearly all 17 are strongholds of Islam, Hinduism or other non-Christian beliefs, and many are "hostile to Christian missions."

In 1950, only seven of the 25 largest cities were predominantly non-Christian.

Barrett plans this summer to complete a study of the world's 2,700 cities with 100,000 or more people. He wrote the 1982 "World Christian Encyclopedia," a 14-year project during which he visited 212 nations.

"There must be 500 big cities where there are either no Christians or no Christian activities, no churches," Barrett estimates.

"Cities are the great phenomenon of the Third World and the 20th century," he says. "The Third World is largely non-Christian; therefore, its cities are going to be largely non-Christian."

The world's urban areas are growing by more than 80,000 non-Christians a day, counting births minus deaths and the influx of people from rural areas, Barrett says.

Christians accounted for 69 percent of the world's urban population in 1900; today, they total only 46 percent, he reports. By 2050, he estimates they will represent just 38 percent.

Three Islamic cities will join the top 25 by the year 2000—Karachi, Pakistan; Baghdad, Iraq; and Dhaka, Bangladesh, each growing to more than 11 million people, according to United Nations statistics used by Barrett.

Four other Islamic cities already among the top 25 will continue to mushroom—Cairo/Giza/Imbaba, Egypt, from 8.5 million in 1985 to 13.2 million in 2000; Jakarta, Indonesia, from 7.9 million to 12.8 million; Tehran, Iran, 7.2 million to 12.7 million and Istanbul, Turkey, from 6.6 million to 11.9 million.

Two Chinese and three Indian cities likewise will remain on the list—Shanghai and Beijing, each with more than 10 million people and millions more in adjacent urban areas by 2000, and greater Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi, with populations ranging from Bombay's 16.3 million people to Delhi's 13.3 million.

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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
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Mexico City, with an estimated 26.3 million people, will become the world's largest city in 2000, replacing Tokyo/Yokohama and its estimated 17.1 million people by that year.

In the United States, Chicago will drop off the top-25 list. New York City/Northeast New Jersey will fall from third to fifth; Los Angeles/Long Beach from seventh to 15th.

By 2050, New York no longer will be among the 25 largest cities.

In Africa at large, the population explosion is bolstering Christianity, Barrett says. Churches are growing by six million people a year, and two-thirds of them are from Christian families.

Among measures Barrett advocates for reaching urban populations are "megaministries" geared to reach 100,000 to one million people a day through radio, TV, films and Bible distribution; giving evangelistic priority to areas where there are no Christians; and interdenominational cooperation.

"No denomination," he says, "can evangelize the world by itself."

As the population explosion continues, Barrett notes, "Everybody is going to run into trouble. It's not just going to be a missionary problem or a church problem." Terrorist attacks may spiral; the international business community may falter; desperately poor people may form a sea of humanity and swarm into neighboring countries.

Even if Southern Baptists reach their Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5,000 missionaries, Barrett asks, "What is their impact on a world of five billion people? The answer is, one missionary per million people. That's not all that powerful an influence."

And many communist and Islamic countries are closed to missionaries from the United States. Efforts to assist Christians abroad who can gain entry must be expanded, he says.

Counting all Christian groups in the world, there are 250,000 foreign missionaries. Strategists say the number must quadruple. But, Barrett says, each Christian faces a serious question: "Am I prepared to quadruple my own support, financial and spiritual? Unless I do, I'm not really making any impact at all on the world." Christians worldwide presently give an average of only 10 cents a week to foreign missions.

Missions as a whole also faces a personnel problem, Barrett says. Much of the force is 60 years old and above. The validity of foreign missions has been debated in various denominations since the early 1970s, cutting the flow of new recruits. The Anglican agency to which Barrett belongs, for example, has declined from 1,200 members to 200. Southern Baptists are among the few groups which have increased their missionary force.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Seminary Presidents Respond  
To Peace Committee Document

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press  
3/7/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Affirmation mingled with concern characterizes reactions of Southern Baptist Convention seminary presidents to a statement on "theological diversity" drafted by the SBC Peace Committee.

The Peace Committee's statement, approved during the group's meeting Feb. 24-25, says in part, "We have found significant theological diversity within our seminaries reflective of the theological diversity within our wider constituency."

The report was written following visitations by Peace Committee subcommittees to all six Southern Baptist seminaries. It notes examples of diversity "are found among those who claim to hold a high view of Scripture and to teach in accordance with and not contrary to the Baptist Faith and Message statement of 1963."

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Topics about which the statement says teachers hold varying views include the historicity of Adam and Eve, the historical fact of "every event in Scripture," the authorship of biblical books and the nature of miracles.

Baptist Press contacted presidents of five Southern Baptist theological seminaries—Russell Dilday of Southwestern, Milton Ferguson of Midwestern, Harold Graves of Golden Gate, Roy Honeycutt of Southern and Landrum Leavell of New Orleans. Randall Lolley of Southeastern was in Alabama for a funeral and could not be reached.

The seminary leaders unanimously expressed support for the work of the Peace Committee. "I applaud the work of the committee," said Leavell. "They have the only viable means of diffusing some of the anger and heat in the denomination."

The presidents also offered positive assessments of the basic assumption of the statement, although some of them expressed reservations about the way in which the report was worded.

"It's true. We do have diversity, not only between seminaries but on the same faculty of a given seminary," noted Harold Graves, president emeritus of Golden Gate, who has been named interim president following the resignation of Franklin Pollard.

Dilday supported "the idea that there is diversity," which the statement expresses. "That is positive and affirmative. It is the Baptist way," he said. "We can be brothers without being twin brothers."

"We can move forward," Honeycutt said of the direction the report leads. He noted he based his assessment upon affirmation he found in the document "which characterizes the convention and in turn the seminary professors."

Ferguson pointed out the diversity the statement mentions "is appropriate and helpful, especially when it reflects the genuine diversity within our larger fellowship."

Despite their affirmations of the concept of diversity, the seminary presidents expressed some concerns.

"I'm very supportive of the Peace Committee. We had a very good experience with the subcommittee that visited here," Dilday said. "However, I was surprised to see the Peace Committee making reports through the press rather than to the convention of the whole."

Dilday also shared reservations about possible interpretations of the statement. "The impression of the report about diversity is really misleading," he said. "In reading the report, I would get the impression that about half the seminary professors hold views to the left of center and half to the right.

"That's simply not true," he added. "At our school, there would be a very small amount who would hold to the views described. The statement sounds like there is far greater diversity than we have."

Dilday said he fears the report will do more to raise "concern among our constituency" than it will to "move us toward peace."

Honeycutt related a concern regarding wording which located the diversity "within our seminaries" rather than among faculty members who teach at the seminaries. "Seminaries don't teach; professors teach," he explained. "We need to keep in focus that these are not seminary divergencies, but rather diversity among professors who teach." He stressed that even with diversity, seminary professors have not been accused of teaching contrary to the guiding statements which they have signed.

He also cautioned against locating theological diversity strictly within the seminaries, which were singled out by the Peace Committee document. He explained: "Diversity runs through seminaries, local churches and other Baptist groups. You cannot divide the convention along lines of diversity and isolate a school, association or church. It runs through the very fabric of our convention," leaving each church or other unit a product of diverse Southern Baptists.

Reading from a prepared statement, Ferguson echoed Honeycutt: "It is important to remember that there is also diversity among faculty members within our individual seminaries as well as among the institutions. This is appropriate and helpful, especially when it reflects the genuine diversity within our larger fellowship."

Ferguson stressed he did not intend his comments as a "critique of the Peace Committee." He noted the visit of the subcommittee which visited Midwestern was "very helpful and productive" and added, "I'm very encouraged by the work of the committee to this point."

He also said: "The subcommittee, in its published report, focuses on the diversity within our seminaries and indicates that such is 'reflective of the theological diversity within our wider constituency.'... Personally, I believe our unity in Christ is much deeper and much more profound than our diversity, as significant as that may be."

Speaking of that unity, Graves, who first became Golden Gate's president in 1952, said: "I've been at this a long time, and I feel there is solid theological education in our seminaries. Our people are orthodox."

"My personal concern is not over the fact that there is diversity," added Leavell. "My chief concern would be the direction that could be taken by the proposed subcommittee to study negative (Cooperative Program) designations. This could ultimately sound the death knell of the Cooperative Program and our cooperative unity that has marked us since 1925."

The seminary presidents pointed to unity as the foundation of "bridges between those holding divergent views" which the Peace Committee's report said the committee seeks to build.

Such bridges are "rooted in one's Christian commitment," Leavell said. "If we're brothers in Christ, there's got to be bridges. We're going to have to come back to our Christian commitment--to allow a brother to be gifted in a different way and still serve together."

"We need to emphasize the building of trust," added Honeycutt, adding conversations seminary leaders have had with Peace Committee subcommittees have provided "a beginning."

"We're like a big circle," explained Dilday. "We have our edges--charismatic, ecumenical, fundamental, dispensational edges. We need those edges; they're windows into other theological worlds. They probe our thinking, keeping us sensitive and aware."

"But when any small minority on the edge attempts to reshape the rest of us--who are in the 'radical middle,' within the main thrust of our Baptist doctrine and heritage--there is trouble. That's why we need bridges of understanding. It is true we have diverse views, but the main body (of Southern Baptists) stays in the giant mainstream where we share common beliefs."

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Crowders Respond  
To Suit Criticism

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press  
3/7/86

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Robert and Julia Crowder have responded to four associations and two churches who were critical of the Birmingham couple for filing suit against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee.

In December, the Crowders and a Windsor, Mo., layman--Henry C. Cooper--filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, claiming their rights had been violated during the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC because of what they claim were violations of the SBC Bylaws during election of the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees.

The Crowders later were joined by a Vero Beach, Fla., layman, H. Allen McCartney.

In January, a parallel lawsuit was filed in Fulton County (Atlanta) Ga., by five laypersons from five states, who were represented by the Crowder's attorneys, Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore, and which sought the same relief as the federal suit.

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Crowder said four associations and two churches have taken official action, citing scriptural admonitions against Christians suing Christians, which have been communicated to him. The actions ask that the lawsuit be dropped, he said.

The retired Birmingham layman told Baptist Press he has "tried to stay as low key as I can, without ignoring them (the associations and churches). I have answered because I do not feel I have the right to ignore them."

In the letter, which also was sent to state Baptist newspapers in Tennessee, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Kentucky, the Crowders note they "share your desire to resume our emphasis on Bold Mission Thrust and see our home and foreign mission efforts grow as souls are won to Jesus Christ."

"We feel the lawsuit is indeed a tragedy," they write. "Unfortunately, if the inappropriate and illegal actions which occurred in Dallas are not corrected, a greater tragedy will take place: the Southern Baptist Convention will be ruled by the whim of the person who holds the gavel and those who advise him."

"The history of the world is replete with tyranny of well-meaning religious groups," they wrote.

The letter adds: "Tragically, during the 1985 convention the will of the majority was ignored and tyranny was the result. Just as Martin Luther was willing to incur the wrath of the Catholic Church when he asserted the just are saved by faith, Julia and I feel we have no choice but to encounter the disapproval of those who have not personally heard or seen the tyranny that transpired in Dallas."

The Crowders, the letter says, "totally subscribe to I Corinthians 6:1-8...and prayerfully considered our actions for 145 days while we tried to get this matter resolved within the SBC." It adds the Executive Committee and its president "not only refused to deal with the violation of the bylaws but also chose to release the news of the possible suit to the press."

The letter quotes from an editorial written by R.G. Puckett in the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina which says:

"...Likewise, Matthew 5:40 enjoines that the one being sued is to yield, giving not only what the courts may award, but more than that. In other words, if the Crowders press their case, Charles Stanley (president of the SBC) is instructed by the words of Jesus to give not only the coat but the cloak as well...."

The Crowders conclude their letter by noting they have, to date, received no response from convention officers, the Executive Committee or the Peace Committee "to settle this injustice. Julia and I continue to agonize as we pray that those who committed the violations will bring forth meaningful proposals to resolve this matter."

They ask those who have been critical of their action to "join us in prayer for our convention and in the commitment to do all within our power to retain the grassroot support of the local church and the strength of a denomination led by the Holy Spirit."

According to the letter, the Crowders received letters informing them of official action by four associations: Indian Creek in Waynesboro, Tenn.; Santa Rosa in Milton, Fla.; Friendship in Oneonta, Ala., and Troup County in LaGrange, Ga.

Two churches also passed resolutions which were forwarded to the Crowders: Macedonia church, Jonesville, Ky., and First church, Remlap, Ala.



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