



BAPTIST PRESS

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June 10, 1987

87-89

Christians Terrorized In Mountains Of India

MALLIKAPORI, India (BP)—For more than a year religious radicals in the Khond Hills district of eastern India have terrorized Christian families, burned churches and imprisoned pastors.

More than 3,000 delegates representing 120 Baptist churches of the isolated region who gathered for their annual convention shared testimonies of how the persecution had strengthened their faith. And they vowed to continue boldly proclaiming the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

One pastor told how his members watched their church burning. "It's too bad your church has been destroyed," a voice in an angry mob said with sarcasm. A new member replied, "You can burn our place of worship, but you cannot destroy our church, because it's in our hearts."

Meeting under a large brush arbor in Mallikapori, the delegates pledged to work together in providing materials and labor needed to rebuild four torched churches.

Southern Baptist representatives of National Indian Ministries, which coordinates the work of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in India, attended the convention. Khond Hills delegates voted to ask the board to donate \$2,000 for roofing materials. The money was released in May.

Three Baptist leaders traveling to assess damage to one burned church were attacked by a mob of 40 people. The Baptists, including Sushant Naik, associational missionary, and Paul Pradhan, general secretary for the association, escaped serious injury. Their motorcycle, however, was badly damaged.

Many new believers at the convention attributed their conversions to the way Christians handled the persecutions. They said that as they watched Christians refuse to resist persecution or react with vengeance they were embarrassed by the actions of their fellow Hindus. They saw Christians had discovered a better way of life.

Some Christian families have had their houses torn down and their crops ruined. Some have been chased from the villages where they lived.

In one instance after a Christian family had been arrested, the Hindu priest who had brought charges against them died from a heart attack. A short time later the police inspector handling the case also died. The family was released, and persecution in the community ceased. Several new believers were baptized.

Recent news reports from inside the country indicate that about 90 activists belonging to organizations responsible for the persecution have been arrested by government authorities.

Baptists estimate 10 to 20 percent of the isolated tribal people in these eastern interior mountains have become Christians. Most of them are identified with the 200,000-strong Kui tribe and come from an animistic background that until the 1930s included child sacrifice. The churches of the Khond Hills Baptist Union resulted from work by British missionaries.

Youth's Concern For Friend
Evokes Call From Dodger Manager

By Lonnie Wilkey

NASHVILLE (BP)—A 13-year-old Baptist girl's concern for her terminally ill friend recently brought the courageous youth a once-in-a-lifetime thrill.

Marea Herrington and John Joseph (J.J.) DeMatteo, 14, are best of friends who share many common interests, especially baseball and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Marea is able to play softball, but unfortunately J.J.'s playing days may be over. Two years ago doctors discovered that J.J., the son of Joe and Pat DeMatteo of Hermitage, Tenn., had a brain tumor. And despite three operations, the tumor reoccurred, leading to J.J.'s return to Children's Hospital of Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

J.J.'s condition recently caused him to lose his voice and eventually lapse into a deep sleep. After countless prayers and efforts by Vanderbilt physicians, the youngster emerged from the coma-like condition and regained his speech.

Marea, a student at Dupont-Tyler Junior High School, felt compelled to do something special for her friend who had exhibited so much courage during his fight with cancer.

Before leaving on a vacation trip with her parents, Marea wrote a letter to Dodger Manager Tommy Lasorda in which she told of J.J.'s love for the Dodgers.

She issued a plea to Lasorda to write her friend a letter as soon as he could "because J.J. does not have many days left."

Instead of writing, Lasorda went one step further upon receipt of Marea's handwritten note.

Lasorda called J.J. June 3 and talked with him and his mother. Mrs. DeMatteo said her son's eyes got "very big" when she told him who was on the phone.

His mother related Lasorda told J.J. he was thinking about him and expressed wishes that he get well soon. Lasorda then asked J.J. if there were any Dodger players he would like to speak with.

The Dodger manager then placed ace pitcher Fernando Valenzuela on the phone. The Dodger All-Star chatted briefly with J.J. who then talked to two other Dodgers including pitcher Rich Honeycutt, one of the National League's leading pitchers this season.

Lasorda then came back on the phone, Mrs. DeMatteo said, and told J.J. to "tell everyone who comes to your room Tommy Lasorda loves you and they ought to love you too." He then promised J.J. the Dodgers would win their next game for him, which they did.

Mrs. DeMatteo said Lasorda asked to be kept informed of her son's progress. She confessed to "not being much of a baseball fan" but said she would now root for the Dodgers and especially Lasorda, whom she described as "a marvelous person."

Marea, after returning from vacation and learning about the call, was equally ecstatic: "I didn't think at first my letter would be taken seriously or that it would even be read by Mr. Lasorda. I am so happy for J.J., and I'm glad I at least got to make sure one of his dreams came true."

Marea is the daughter of Richard and Sharon Herrington of Hermitage. Herrington is pastor of Hermitage Hills Baptist Church, where the DeMatteos are members.

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Atlanta ACTS Campaign
Gets \$664,000 In Launch

Baptist Press
6/10/87

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptists' ACTS television network reached more than half of a local \$1.2 million fund-raising goal during a series of banquets in the Atlanta area in late May.

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Pledges and cash gifts received at the four dinners totaled \$644,723, announced Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which operates ACTS.

Of that amount, \$89,095 is cash that was received at the banquets or during the current fiscal year, which began last Oct. 1, said Richard T. McCartney, RTVC executive vice president. The remainder of the funds are represented in pledges that are to be paid off in three years or less, he added.

The May banquets marked the formal start of a renovated capital development campaign for ACTS in Atlanta, McCartney said. Previous efforts, which involved more RTVC funding support, had cost more to conduct than they raised. For example, the first stage of the Atlanta ACTS campaign cost \$296,000 in fiscal 1985 and fiscal 1986 and netted only \$115,000. Those losses were absorbed by RTVC budgets for those fiscal years.

Now Atlanta Baptists are responding in "a wonderful fashion to the opportunity to reach out to the families of America through ACTS 'teleMissions,'" the current capital campaign, Allen said. He expressed optimism the remainder of the goal would be reached by the end of summer.

"We have proposals totaling more than \$400,000 pending before several foundations," he said. "One of these is looking with favor at a \$200,000 proposal to fund the ACTS delivery system for Atlanta area cable companies."

That grant would cover the \$200,000 the Atlanta ACTS board is to receive out of the overall local goal of \$1.2 million, McCartney explained. That amount should finance the local ACTS office as well as the cable delivery system.

The other \$1 million is targeted for needs of the entire ACTS network, including start-up expenses, program production and equipment, Allen said. It is part of a \$10 million RTVC/ACTS development campaign authorized by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

The Atlanta campaign is expected to cost \$167,000 in staff travel, consultants' fees, the price of the four dinners and expenses of the campaign office, McCartney said. After these expenses are paid, income from the campaign will be available to meet financial needs of both the ACTS network and the Atlanta ACTS board, he added.

If the goal is surpassed, the local ACTS board will receive 18 percent of the overage, with the balance going to the network, he said.

In addition to the gifts and pledges, the ACTS effort in Atlanta has benefitted from a reorganization that has developed alongside the fund-raising efforts, Allen said. Previously, the Atlanta area was home to several ACTS boards that each dealt with separate cable television systems. These groups have consolidated into a single Atlanta ACTS board that deals with all of the cable systems.

ACTS also received another boost with the addition of seven new cable systems in the Atlanta area, Allen added. The systems reach 131,000 new households, and they were scheduled to begin carrying ACTS June 1.

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Islamic Prisoners Lose
Free Exercise Challenge

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
6/10/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—The Supreme Court ruled June 9 that prison officials are not obligated under the U.S. Constitution to allow Islamic prisoners the right to attend weekly services required by their faith if the officials can demonstrate such denial is "reasonable."

In a 5-4 decision announced by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, the high court ruled against two inmates in New Jersey's Leesburg State Prison — one of whom has died since the pair challenged prison policy — who sought to attend Jumu'ah, a Muslim congregational service held every Friday afternoon.

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Although an Islamic chaplain in the Leesburg prison is provided by the state and various other accommodations to Muslim prisoners' religious needs are available, attendance at the weekly service may be restricted in the larger security interests of the facility, the court held.

Overruling the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals, Rehnquist — joined by Justices Byron R. White, Lewis F. Powell Jr., Sandra Day O'Connor and Antonin Scalia — held that prison officials have no constitutional obligation to provide prisoners the more stringent protection owed other citizens. The prisoners had claimed the right to attend the services under the free exercise of religion clause of the First Amendment.

While he acknowledged the prisoners' sincerely held religious view that attendance at Jumu'ah was not optional under the Muslim faith, Rehnquist nevertheless wrote, "To ensure that courts afford appropriate deference to prison officials, we have determined that prison regulations alleged to infringe constitutional rights are judged under a 'reasonableness' test less restrictive than that ordinarily applied to alleged infringements of fundamental constitutional rights."

The lower court was wrong, Rehnquist continued, "by placing the burden on prison officials" to make accommodations beyond the "reasonableness" standard, thereby failing "to reflect the respect and deference that the United States Constitution allows for the judgment of prison administrators." He added, "While we in no way minimize the central importance of Jumu'ah to (the prisoners), we are unwilling to hold that prison officials are required by the Constitution to sacrifice legitimate penological objectives to that end."

Primary among those objectives, the majority noted, was security in the overcrowded Leesburg facility. Security concerns led prison officials in 1983 to make several changes in prison policy, including an order that inmates could no longer move directly from maximum security to "full minimum" status but were required first to spend a period of time in "intermediate gang minimum" status. The order further decreed "gang minimum" prisoners be assigned outdoor work duty and not be permitted re-entry to the main building during the work day. Because the Friday Jumu'ah service was held inside the main building during the work day, prisoners working on outside details were not to be permitted to attend.

Claiming the new order violated their free exercise rights, Ahmad Uthman Shabbaz — since deceased — and Sadr-Ud-Din Nafis Mateen took prison officials to court. Although a federal district court upheld the regulations, the 3rd circuit panel reversed. That decision set the stage for the final appeal to the nation's high court.

Justice William J. Brennan Jr. filed a dissenting opinion, arguing for himself and Justices Thurgood Marshall, Harry A. Blackmun and John Paul Stevens that the "reasonableness" standard for all constitutional challenges by inmates is "inadequate."

Although he acknowledged that prison officials "have the difficult and often thankless job of preserving security in a potentially explosive setting," Brennan wrote that prisoners still "retain constitutional rights that limit the exercise of official authority against them."

He added: "The Constitution was not adopted as a means of enhancing the efficiency with which government officials conduct their affairs, nor as a blueprint for ensuring sufficient reliance on administrative expertise. Rather, it was meant to provide a bulwark against infringements that might otherwise be justified as necessary expedients of governing."

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Hurt Undergoes
Surgery In Dallas

Baptist Press
6/10/87

DALLAS (BP)—John J. Hurt, editor emeritus of the Baptist Standard, Texas Baptists' weekly newsjournal, is recuperating in Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas following emergency abdominal surgery June 8 to repair a hemorrhaging aneurysm.

Hurt's surgery was believed to be unrelated to an incident of the previous week when he became lost and drove his automobile into an eastern Dallas County pond. He was hospitalized for three days after going for two days without food or blood pressure medication.

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Following that incident, he was released from the hospital June 6 but awoke early June 8 with abdominal pain.

He is expected to remain in intensive care for several days and in the hospital for about two weeks.

Hurt, 78, retired in 1977 after 11 years as editor of the Standard. He previously had been editor of the Christian Index, Georgia Baptists' newsjournal, for 19 years.

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Korean Pastors Study Ways To
Reach American-born Offspring

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
6/10/87

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Pastors of English-speaking Korean Southern Baptist churches have met for the first time to explore ways of reaching more of their group for Christ.

Representing the denomination's fastest-growing ethnic group, the pastors gathered in Memphis, Tenn., to study ways of reaching a growing number of young Koreans caught in an identity crisis between their American upbringing and Korean traditions. The two-day session was held at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

Dan Moon, Korean consultant for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and director of language missions for the Brotherhood Commission, said the problem is a natural result of second-generation immigrants who adopt Western values that clash with the cultural traditions of their parents.

The crisis is complicated when their only worship service is conducted in Korean and they know little of the language, he said: "Many times we hear of adults who are engaged in Korean language services but whose English-speaking children wander the halls because they have little in common with the worship experience. They cannot worship in a language they barely understand."

In response, Korean language churches are launching English-speaking congregations to meet the needs of the American-born generation.

Jei Whan Kim, associate pastor of First Korean Baptist Church of Silver Spring, Md., explained how his Korean-speaking church conducts English services for junior and senior high students and offers English and Korean alternatives to college students.

The denomination's largest Korean-speaking church, with an average attendance of 1,000, began the innovative approach to ministry four years ago.

Since 1971 Korean Southern Baptist congregations have grown from two to 550 in the United States. The group has projected an additional 450 churches and missions by 1990, Moon said.

Oscar Romo, director of the language missions division for the Home Mission Board, said future growth among ethnics will depend on the denomination's ability to adapt the gospel to the needs of each language group. "Our calling is not to Americanize but to evangelize" the ethnics, he said.

"You cannot sell the same product to everyone using the same techniques; you cannot simply translate one tract into dozens of languages and expect it to say the same thing to each group. Language and culture are the two ways Southern Baptists are going to communicate the gospel to America's ethnics," he said.

In discussing ways of marketing the gospel, Romo said it is as wrong to package the gospel in an exclusively Anglo context as it is to limit it to a German or Polish framework: "Howard Johnson's has 28 flavors of ice cream with all the same basic ingredients but with different flavors. We need to keep the same gospel message but wrap it to make it acceptable to the various cultures we want to reach."

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