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May 11, 1988

88-79

Foreign Mission Board invites
Independent groups to meeting

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Leaders of about 25 organizations founded by Southern Baptist individuals for missions efforts abroad are being invited to a dialogue with the denomination's Foreign Mission Board staff next February.

The organizations are independent of the board and are primarily involved in evangelism. Several also sponsor human needs ministries. They are located in 12 states.

In a May 2 letter of invitation, Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks listed several reasons leaders of the agency have initiated the Feb. 7, 1989, meeting. At the top of the list: "To effectively mobilize Southern Baptist resources for Bold Mission Thrust," Southern Baptists' campaign to be involved in efforts to evangelize the world's population by the year 2000.

Parks also said he hopes the board and the independent organizations will gain "mutual understanding" of each other's purposes and programs. He hopes they will explore possibilities for cooperation or for working in complementary ways.

Such cooperation, he wrote, could help "conserve results of evangelism overseas through local Baptist churches" and "avoid duplication of effort, finances and administration where possible."

The agenda of the meeting, Parks said, will be developed through correspondence with the participants and during the early part of the Feb. 7 meeting. Meals and meeting space will be provided at the board's Richmond, Va., offices. Transportation and housing will be handled by each participant.

Parks has spearheaded two similar meetings. Leaders of overseas Baptist unions and conventions related to Southern Baptist foreign mission work met in 1985 at Ridgecrest, N.C., and leaders of various missionary-sending denominations and interdenominational organizations met last September and again in February in Dallas.

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Lolley says 'pre-arranged'
Agenda threatens SBC

By Pat Cole

N- (CO
(SBS)

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5/11/88

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) --A "pre-arranged agenda" by conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention looms as the controlling force for the denomination's agencies and institutions, claimed former Southeastern Baptist Theological President W. Randall Lolley.

"Trustees are no longer free to debate and decide issues coming before the boards for themselves," said Lolley in a late April address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "They have people breathing down their necks to accomplish the pre-arranged agendas that were promoted to them before they got on their campuses."

Lolley, who recently accepted the invitation to be pastor of First Baptist Church of Raleigh, N.C., resigned from the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary after trustees took measures to ensure that only people professing biblical inerrancy would be added to the faculty.

He told a Southern Seminary chapel audience that recent actions of the SBC Committee on Nominations give further evidence of the role of people outside the trustee boards in controlling SBC boards and agencies.

He cited news reports of conservative leader Paige Patterson being substituted for a prominent pastor as the Texas representative on the Foreign Mission Board and a Florida nominee for the Southern Seminary board of trustees being replaced by a member of a church where SBC President Adrian P. Rogers earlier served as pastor.

Lolley suggested the nomination of Jim Ballard of First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Fla., as a Southern Seminary trustee might indicate that Southern is being targeted by conservatives.

"One has to wonder whether Southern is the next seminary to be targeted and whether President Rogers has now finally become personally involved in events pressing his own political agenda and his own personal vendetta against persons on this campus," he said.

Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, would "if elected, be in an excellent position" to follow R. Keith Parks as Foreign Mission Board president, Lolley said. "That's the position, which rumor has it, that Patterson has said he aspires to more than any other in the Southern Baptist Convention."

While Rogers could not be reached for comment, Patterson replied in a telephone interview that he has no "aspirations except to do the will of God. Insofar as I know, I am going to spend the rest of my life attempting to build my college here."

He said he does not think being a board member of an agency would make a person more likely to be named an agency head.

"I'm also amazed that Dr. Lolley has nothing better to do with his time except spread rumors," said Patterson. "If he wanted to know (Patterson's aspirations), he should have gone to the source."

Lolley also voiced a concern for Southern Seminary in response to recent statements made by conservative leader Paul Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, which Lolley alleged were inconsistent.

Lolley claimed Pressler accused Southern Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt of liberalism just eight days before he publicly affirmed Honeycutt's leadership of Southern.

Citing a report in the Baptist New Mexican, Lolley said Pressler told a Hobbs, N.M., audience in early April numerous examples of liberalism exist in Southern Baptist seminaries. He noted Pressler named Honeycutt, Southern professor E. Glenn Hinson and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Temp Sparkman as examples of liberals.

About a week later, Pressler, in an address at Southern Seminary, predicted Southern would avoid a major administrative shake-up like the one at Southeastern Seminary because of the "leadership of Dr. Honeycutt." Pressler told Southern students Honeycutt had made "realistic efforts" to hire conservative faculty members.

"I know the leader Roy Honeycutt is in his soul," said Lolley, "but I have to ask you at Southern, which Pressler do you believe? The one spouting poison in New Mexico or the one pouring oil in Kentucky? And how long is that judge going to keep his confidence in your school after the day comes when he gets one vote more than the majority on your board?"

Contacted about Lolley's remarks, Pressler claimed Lolley "misrepresented what I said" in the New Mexico address. Pressler said nowhere in the Baptist New Mexican article was he directly quoted as calling anybody a liberal. He said he simply read from published works and let people draw their own conclusions.

"I don't brand an individual," said Pressler. "I will talk about liberalism in the convention. I just read some things and let my audience conclude if that's what they want taught in our seminaries."

He said Lolley should be "more interested in what I say rather than caricaturing me."

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Pressler also maintained he has a high regard for Honeycutt: "Dr. Honeycutt is a Christian gentleman. I appreciate him greatly as I said at Southern Seminary. I am concerned about some of the things he has written."

In his address at Southern, Lolley insisted the central point of debate in the Southern Baptist theological/political struggle is freedom.

"I hope our people learn from all this that the real issue in the Southern Baptist controversy is freedom," he stressed. "Free consciences, free churches, free classrooms, free citizenship, all within the context of a free country. Of course this freedom is tough and tender. It is responsible because it is freedom in Christ."

He denied the controversy was primarily over the Bible or liberalism: "We are now what we were in 1979 (the year the controversy began). The fundamentalists know that. They know we are a basic conservative, Bible-believing bunch of Baptists."

Lolley said the SBC Peace Committee through its subcommittees conducted an in-depth investigation of 10 Southern Baptist agencies and institutions employing more than 11,000 people and found only 33 concerns. He noted no formal charges stemmed from the concerns raised by the Peace Committee.

He said the diversity of Southern Baptists might represent "free-church evangelicalism instead of independent fundamentalism, but it's not liberalism, or words have no meaning."

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SBC workshop provides help
For ministers needing jobs

By Jim Newton

N-HMB
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists need 35,000 bivocational ministers willing to serve in 35,000 ministry opportunities, supporting themselves financially in secular jobs, participants in a national conference were told.

Dale Holloway, national consultant on bivocational ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said the denomination already has available both the 35,000 ministers and the 35,000 opportunities but has not been able to help connect the available personnel with the ministry needs.

Speaking at a conference jointly sponsored by the Home Mission Board and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Holloway said the biggest challenge the denomination faces is "to connect every God-called minister to every ministry opportunity."

"We're doing a miserable job of making those connections," said Holloway, a bivocational minister who works with the Home Mission Board and is pastor of Day Star Baptist Church in Florence, Miss.

The three-day meeting, the first conference of its kind sponsored by Southern Baptists, was designed to train and equip bivocational ministers in how to find a good secular job and a fulfilling ministry.

The Southern Baptist Convention has 7,500 bivocational ministers within 500 miles of Jackson, Miss., Holloway said. Pointing to a map showing where bivocational ministers serve, he noted the ministers are concentrated in the southern states, while the urgent need for their services is in the northern and western states, where Baptist churches are sparse.

"I love to watch red Cardinals, but I've never seen more than three in my yard at one time," Holloway said. "God is too wise to allow 17,000 red Cardinals in my backyard -- he's scattered them throughout the whole nation so everyone can enjoy them."

"Baptists have committed a crime worse than robbing a liquor store if we have created the image that the only way to be successful as a minister is to be pastor of a red brick church in a county seat town in the south."

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The denomination is preparing an entire generation of ministers for positions that do not exist, Holloway said. Almost all churches with enough financial resources to employ a full-time pastor already have one, he said. The increasing need, he added, is for pastors and staff members of small churches with fewer than 100 members that cannot afford to pay full-time salaries.

Not all bivocational ministers should be pastors, but most should be in other church staff roles, he added, noting, "We could put 37,000 bivocational ministers to work immediately if all SBC churches would accept the concept of multi-staff bivocational ministries in which ministers of education, youth and music supported themselves with secular jobs."

Carl Barrington, associate director of church/minister relations at Southwestern Seminary, said most recent seminary graduates are not willing to take the small step toward a bivocational ministry. "They want to take one giant step and go to a full-time church where they can achieve their ultimate goals immediately," he explained.

David Bunch, director of the Home Mission Board church extension division, pointed out the tremendous need for bivocational ministers to be involved in starting new churches as a part of the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust goal for 50,000 churches by the year 2000. To achieve that goal, Bunch said, the denomination must start an average of 1,300 new churches and missions a year. Currently, the SBC is starting only about 800 new missions a year.

Bunch distributed to conference participants a list of more than 230 specific ministry needs, most of which could be filled by a bivocational minister, and urged them to respond.

Bivocational pastors may be just as effective, or even more effective, as full-time pastors, especially as church starters, he contended.

Don Beall, director of missions for three Baptist associations in the eastern half of South Dakota, summarized a plan he developed to help bivocational ministers find jobs and a place of ministry in his part of the country. Beall actively recruited bivocational ministers for seven churches in his associations.

Each of the seven churches has approved a covenant outlining about 15 items the church and pastor would agree to do to help a bivocational minister, who would sign a similar 14-point covenant. The church agreed, for example, to arrange for five secular job interviews and find five available housing possibilities for the bivocational minister to consider before accepting the position.

Each church sent with Beall a notebook with copies of the covenant agreements, photographs of the church, its constitution and bylaws, its budget, classified ads of housing and jobs available, lists of other churches and schools, and lists of job possibilities from the state employment commission.

Beall's plan calls for the bivocational minister to work as a church staff member with the host church pastor for at least nine months under a mentor relationship. During this period, the bivocational church staff member would learn the cultural taboos of the area and discover which methods of evangelism and church starting are most effective.

Before the end of the first year, the bivocational minister would start a new mission or home Bible study fellowship with the assistance of a core group of Sunday school teachers and a pianist from the host church.

"This is a radical plan that's never been tried before," said Beall, "but we are convinced it can work." Beall plans to develop a how-to manual based on the experiences in South Dakota and further test the method in New England and other parts of the country.

Most of the three-day conference was devoted to practical training sessions to help bivocational ministers find a secular job. Sessions were led by David Yarbrough, a bivocational pastor from Montesano, Wash., who for three years led similar training conferences for unemployed people through the Department of Social and Health Services for the state of Washington. He now is a part-time social worker assigned to adult services in Aberdeen, Wash.

Yarbrough, who pointed out he never planned to be bivocational, said he did not know how to look for a job when his church was unable to pay a full-time salary. "Seminary had not trained me how to deal with personnel directors or how to respond to a team interview," he said.

Yarbrough led the group in practical training on how to fill out a job application, how to get an interview, how to respond to tough interview questions, how to use the telephone to find unadvertised jobs in the hidden job market where openings never show up in newspapers and how to write and prepare resumes targeted to specific jobs.

More than 1,000 recent Southwestern Seminary graduates in Texas and Oklahoma who have not found a church or ministry position were invited to the conference, held at the seminary campus in Fort Worth, Texas.

Barrington expressed disappointment that only about 50 people attended the first-of-its-kind conference. Only 22 paid registrants attended the entire three-day seminar. Barrington attributed the response to timing of the conference during final exams and inability of graduates to take two days off secular jobs to attend.

Both Holloway and Barrington, however, called the conference highly successful in achieving the purpose of providing practical help for bivocational ministers on how to find a good job and meaningful ministry.

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Mid-Continent College
Names Butler president

N-10

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MAYFIELD, Ky. (BP)--LaVerne Butler, pastor of Ninth and O Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., has been elected president of Mid-Continent Bible College in Mayfield, Ky.

Butler, 62, who has been pastor of the Louisville congregation 20 years, was elected April 29 and will take office July 15. He succeeds Raymond E. Lawrence, who resigned the post in August 1987 and now is with Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.

Mid-Continent College, 39 years old, is supported by 14 Baptist district associations in Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri and Tennessee. It is governed by 28 trustees, two from each of the 14 associations. It has about 200 students and a budget of \$500,000 per year.

Butler, also a trustee and secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, said the college received accreditation last year from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and offers two bachelor's degrees -- arts and religious education -- but only a single major in Bible. "We are out of debt, on a new campus with 100 acres and five new buildings. We just got our accreditation. It looks like we're ready to go," he told Baptist Press.

Butler, who has been involved in the conservative resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention since the early 1970s, was one of the founders of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, an organization in the vanguard of the effort to turn the SBC to a more conservative direction.

BFMF was started in 1973 by William A. Powell, then a Home Mission Board staff member, who was concerned about liberalism in the denomination. It published the Southern Baptist Journal aimed at exposing liberalism in the denomination.

"I made the motion to name the organization after the Baptist Faith and Message (statement) and the motion to name the publication the Southern Baptist Journal," said Butler, who said he dropped out of the organization in 1979 after recommending it "be put to sleep since it had served its purpose." Butler was BFMF president for three years, ending in 1979.

Most of the original founders have since dropped out of the organization, which continues to operate, although in greatly diminished strength.

Butler is a native of Henderson, Ky., and is a graduate of Georgetown College in Georgetown, Ky., and attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. In addition to the Louisville congregation, he also has been pastor of First Baptist Church of West Franklin, Ill.

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'Ring of promise'
Returns to Korea

By Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr.

F-10
(10.7)

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Calvin Cantrell will return a "ring of promise" during a visit to Korea this month.

Yoo Chung Me pressed the ring into Cantrell's hand in 1980 after he made a promise to pray for her mother's profession of faith in Christ. Her pastor, Johnny Yoo, explained to Cantrell the ring "sealed a promise," and returning it before the act was complete would be unethical.

In March Cantrell, associate evangelism director for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, received word the mother has made a profession of faith. The ring was taken from his bank safety box for the journey by Louisiana Baptists to lead evangelistic services in 20 churches.

The episode shows the extent Korean Baptists believe in the power of prayer, Cantrell said, noting, "Yoo Chung Me believed in the power of prayer so much that she gave me something of great value to her in exchange for my promise to pray for her mother's salvation."

Pastor Yoo now is a professor at Korean Baptist Seminary in Seoul. Chung Me is a seminary student and about to be married to a Baptist minister.

Cantrell is leading a team of 30 Louisiana Baptists for the church evangelistic crusades the first two weeks of May.

The team is working in the same 20 churches where Lay Evangelism School training was given in March, said Cantrell.

In late April, 20 people volunteered to join 10 evangelists as members of the witness teams. "Louisiana volunteers have responded in an excellent manner after Korea sent us a message they wanted evangelistic witness teams to work with their witnesses," said Cantrell.

"In March we trained 823 persons in the techniques of witnessing. They will be members of our teams in May," he reported.

Teams departed May 4 and will return May 21.

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F-55B

Prayer is daily routine
For Edith Gallaher

By Terri Lackey

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WAYNESBORO, Tenn. (BP)--Edith Gallaher remembers praying her first prayer at age 3.

It was a fleeting request, lasting maybe four seconds. "God, please give me a little brother or sister," she asked, just before falling asleep.

That was 69 years ago, when Gallaher's prayers were reflections of childhood wishes.

Prayer for the 72-year-old Waynesboro, Tenn., resident now takes on a more serious tone. Gallaher prays every day, sometimes for as long as three hours at a time.

"I could not live physically without prayer," said the silver-haired Gallaher, who awakens beside her husband, John, each morning about 2:30 and moves to a cedar table in the den where she spends the next few hours in Bible study and prayer.

For 26 years, she has prayed each day like this, reading her Bible and allowing God to lead her prayers.

"The Lord impresses on me what his need is. There are certain people I pray for every day, and other people I pray for when he brings these people to my mind," she said.

Gallaher is a member of the one-year-old National Prayer Corps, a group of about 3,000 Southern Baptists who have pledged to pray at least 30 minutes each day.

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Sponsored by the leadership development section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department, the Prayer Corps is a way to unite Southern Baptists in network praying, thereby presenting a "higher authority to God in prayer," said T.W. Hunt, Lay Institute for Equipping consultant on prayer in the church training department.

"There are few people on earth who know how to pray as well as Mrs. Gallaher," Hunt said. "Her unflagging commitment to do God's work through prayer has motivated me very strongly as I have watched her pray for me and for the work of prayer at the Sunday School Board."

Prayer for Gallaher seems almost instinctive; it is an innate part of her being which has no identifiable source. Her mother died three years ago at age 95 "without knowing the Lord."

Her father apparently died during the Great Depression while traveling and looking for work. When Gallaher was 8, the weekly letters from her father to her and her mother suddenly stopped, and they never heard from him again.

"I used to pray a lot between the ages of 5, 6, and 7 -- just the prayers of a child, you know. I prayed to be able to go see the Christmas tree on the square, or I prayed that my Sunday school teacher would get to come home and have a meal with us."

But it was at age 8 when God answered a prayer to heal a relative who was on her deathbed that Gallaher "knew God was to be trusted."

Gallaher has prayed some unusual prayers in her lifetime.

Prayer led her down a federal prison's death row facilities to visit "Andrew," an inmate whom she befriended in a Texas jail where she and a friend had made weekly visits. "Andrew was electrocuted that night, but he died knowing the Lord," Gallaher said.

She usually follows up her prayers for people she doesn't know with letters. Once when she prayed for the general secretary of the United Nations in the early 1950s and then wrote to him, she received his reply thanking her for her prayers.

A member of First Baptist Church of Waynesboro, Gallaher prays regularly for the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign mission boards, Woman's Missionary Union and, of course, foreign missionaries.

When the pastor of her church went to the foreign mission field, she kept a daily diary of "what the Lord laid on my heart to pray for him, and I sent it as a Christmas present."

Although God did not grant Gallaher her first request of a little brother or sister, she remains a firm believer in answered prayers: "I don't know what I would do if I went a week without having a prayer answered for sure. I just don't know."

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

Israel: where prophecy,
Middle East tension collide

By Art Toalston

F - FMB

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JERUSALEM (BP)--Israel was "a wasteland, a desert, a wilderness" for almost 2,000 years, says Rabbi Pinhas Peli.

No invading nation could make the land flourish, recounts Peli, who writes a column on Judaism in The Jerusalem Post and teaches Jewish thought and literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Peli continues: Centuries ago, rabbis envisioned trees again blooming on the mountains of Judea, a sign that the Messiah is "near."

"Seventy, 80, 100 years ago, Jews started coming back, reclaiming the land and ... now there is green land wherever you go. We are in the midst of a process of Messianic redemption," Peli asserts. "We are moving to a Messianic fulfillment."

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As many as 80 percent of the Jews in Israel, however, have rejected the rigors of Judaism.

Some are agnostic; others believe in God with varying degrees of fervency. They may celebrate Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah; otherwise, they embrace few, if any, religious traditions, such as kosher dietary laws. Their synagogue attendance is, at best, sporadic.

To these Jews, Israel is simply at the 40-year point in its history as a modern nation -- the state was proclaimed May 14, 1948 -- a place of refuge for a people devastated by Nazi atrocities during World War II.

In recent months, however, any festive Israeli spirit has been sapped by violent strife with West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians.

For 20 years, Israel considered itself a relatively benevolent ruler of the territories captured during the Six-Day War in 1967. Israel somehow had kept angry, hopeless young Palestinians in check. No longer. Dozens of Palestinians have died in protests broken up by Israeli troops' bullets.

Israel, probably because the Bible names its people "God's chosen," is accustomed to being scrutinized, accustomed to the world asking: Will it allow the 1.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territories to govern themselves? Will it help create a homeland for some 750,000 Palestinian refugees in the Middle East who had homes and land for generations until 1948 and 1967?

Even some friends of Israel, even some Israelis, wonder aloud whether the young state again may face God's judgment if it fails to act justly.

Among Israel's 4.4 million citizens are 750,000 Arabs who also regard themselves as Palestinians and have sympathies for extended family members and friends in the occupied territories. These Arabs can vote in Israeli elections but are not required to perform compulsory military service. A small minority nevertheless join the army.

Only a tiny minority of Israeli-Arabs are evangelicals. Four out of five are Muslims. The rest are Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic or members of other traditionalist churches.

History, both biblical and social, is inescapable in Israel. To Jews, it is unthinkable that someone could visit yet not care enough to spend time at Yad Vashem, a museum honoring the 6 million Jews killed during the Nazi Holocaust. Ashes from most of the death camps are buried at Yad Vashem, or "Lasting Memorial."

Few tourists would visit Israel, however, were it not the Holy Land. "Almost every step you take has some kind of historical significance," one longtime resident says figuratively.

In Jerusalem, there's the oddity of deciding where Christ was crucified and buried. According to Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox, the events took place where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre now stands, parts of which were built in 634 A.D. Protestants have opted for a site overlooking a busy bus station; archaeologists uncovered it in 1867.

Modern-day realities in Israel are "so terribly different" from the preconceived ideas of many Americans, says Ray Hicks, administrator of the Baptist Convention in Israel, the organization of Baptist representatives. Hicks, who also works with Arab Baptists, says, for example, U.S. churchgoers tend to gloss over the situation of displaced Palestinians.

Illustrating his point, Hicks asks: "What if ... you lived in Fort Worth, Texas, and someone just came in and said they're taking over your block and you have to leave? Would you resist in any way? Or would you just sit passively and say, 'Fine, take it, it's yours'? This sentiment has been voiced on numerous occasions by Palestinians who have lost their lands as a result of wars or security considerations of the state of Israel."

Hicks feels it is grossly unfair for Americans to view all Arabs as terrorists, just as it is wrong of people around the world who see "Dallas" each week to think of all Americans as rich and obnoxious.

"Jerusalem and Nazareth and Bethlehem are very real places with real people and real problems, just like you have everywhere else," says Norm Lytle, who directs the Baptist Village conference and camp center near Tel Aviv.

He sees a "down-to-earth" aspect "of our spiritual heritage. It's no accident that, in this region of the world long associated with war and conflict, it was precisely here that God sent Jesus, the one who brought incomprehensible peace into the world (and made it) available to us all."

There are no congregations of Baptists or other denominations among Jewish believers in Israel. "I don't want to become a member of a Baptist church," one Messianic Jew told Pat and Judy Hoaldrige soon after they came to Israel in 1972. "I would like to see a congregation grow of my own people."

Denominationalism "really doesn't have any meaning over here," comments Hoaldrige, now pastor of Narkis Street Baptist Church in Jerusalem. "That's not the issue in this country" where "for 2,000 years they've been taught by the rabbis that Jesus is a Christian god at best," a god for Gentiles but not for Jews.

"People who called themselves Christians," says Robert Lindsey, "have been among the persecutors -- the main ones -- of the Jewish people in the past 1,000 years." Lindsey and his wife, Margaret, worked in Israel 42 years until their retirement last fall.

Many Jewish people see the Holocaust, in Lindsey's words, as "the end result of the so-called 'Christian' culture of Europe."

Jim Smith, who has worked in Israel with his wife, Betty, since 1955, explains the word "Christian" among Israelis "doesn't have anything to do with new birth, loving one's neighbor, the heart of the faith. It includes anyone who's not Jewish or Muslim -- Catholics ... Mormons ... Nazis."

He recalls one Jewish friend's quip: "I'm glad to know you're a Baptist. I was afraid you might be a Christian."

"You cannot be a witness until you're accepted," Lindsey states, "until people feel that you love them."

Baptist representatives have no qualms about living in the country where Armageddon lies, the battlefield in the Jezreel Valley about 10 miles southwest of Nazareth. Armageddon is perhaps the most heavily contested site in history, most recently in Israel's war for independence four decades ago. It is mentioned in the book of Revelation as the final battleground between good and evil.

The study of prophecy, however, does not consume Baptist representatives to the exclusion of other concerns. Hoaldrige, in visits to the United States, has been asked if a Jewish temple has replaced the Dome of the Rock, the gold-domed Islamic holy site where the temples of Solomon and Herod once stood. "I've had a few people get angry at me" for failing to expound upon prophetic scenarios.

"There's so much happening that we don't have too much time to think about the end times," Hoaldrige says. "The attitude of most Israeli believers is, 'We have a day to speak about the need for Jesus. Let's do it now.'"

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Baptist heritage positive
Toward Jews, prof writes

By Art Toalston

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Baptist forerunners were the first Christians to turn away from anti-Semitism centuries ago, a church historian writes in the May issue of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's magazine, The Commission.

William R. Estep Jr., distinguished professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, adds Baptists in the early 1600s were the first to urge England to readmit Jews. Jews were expelled from England in 1290.

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Baptist forerunners who disputed anti-Semitism were known as Anabaptists. They also were known as the Protestant group who opposed infant baptism, instead believing church membership should be based on personal decisions for Christ and believer's baptism.

Before he joined the Anabaptist movement in 1522, Balthasar Hubmaier led in expelling Jews from Regensburg, Germany. He later wrote "the clearest statement on religious freedom the 16th century produced," Estep notes. Hubmaier's treatise also was "a complete repudiation of his role as a persecutor," Estep says.

Hubmaier argued the state had no right to punish anyone for divergent religious beliefs or atheism. No one is persuaded to accept Christianity "either with sword or yet by fire," Hubmaier wrote. He was burned to death for heresy in 1528.

Another Anabaptist leader, Hans Denck, witnessed to Jews along the Rhine River. Denck gained no converts, but "his reaction was eminently commendable" for holding no bitterness toward Jews who rejected his message, Estep writes.

Such was not the case with Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers. For a time, "Luther longed to see the Jews converted," Estep explains, but Luther's frustration with the Jews' response "caused him to revert to the age-old stereotypes." Luther ended up "fanning the flames of anti-Semitism to new heights" through four treatises against Jews, Estep notes.

Antagonism between Christians and Jews, sometimes open hostility, dates back to the fourth century, Estep writes. During the Crusades, warriors not only targeted Muslims in the Middle East who persecuted Christians but also Jews -- because of the biblical account of Jewish leaders orchestrating Christ's crucifixion, Estep notes. In Germany, "massacre after massacre marked the crusaders' march" through cities with sizable Jewish populations.

Anti-Semitism reached "a scale which Europe had hardly known before" during the 13th century, Estep writes. A Roman Catholic edict, for example, required Jews to live in ghettos and wear hats and arm patches so they could be identified. Jews were wrongly accused of murder to obtain blood for their Passover rituals. Hundreds of synagogues were destroyed and replaced with Christian shrines.

During the 15th century, Jews were expelled from numerous regions. Those in ghettos were herded into cathedrals periodically to hear conversionary sermons.

English Baptists, however, continued in the Anabaptist tradition. Mark Leonard Busher, in a 1614 treatise on religious freedom, also advanced the first argument for readmitting Jews to England with full citizenship, Estep points out. Busher argued that "Jews and all other strangers ... account it tyranny to have their consciences forced to religion by persecution."

Another influential treatise on the subject was penned by Baptist minister Thomas Collier in 1656. England's doors soon reopened to Jews.

In the colonies, Baptists spearheaded the founding of Rhode Island with complete religious liberty, and Jews thus came to Newport to build their second synagogue in America, Estep writes.

Their third synagogue was built in Charleston, S.C., where Baptists and other dissenters also created a climate of toleration. Estep notes, "Soon the Jewish community in Charleston became the largest in the New World.

"Baptists know what persecution can mean for them, too, have experienced it at the hands of those who persecuted the Jews," Estep writes. "Many Jews are amazed when they first learn that Baptists have also been a despised and persecuted people (who) understand the cost of standing up for one's faith in the midst of an unfriendly world.

"Undoubtedly not all Baptists have been exemplary in their attitudes toward their Jewish neighbors. Nevertheless, the heritage of Baptists is one of openness and freedom, even of love for those who differ from them and especially the Jews."