



BAPTIST PRESS
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Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2300
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8911
CompuServe ID# 70420,1

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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Thanks,
Baptist Press

BWA appeals for religious
freedom for USSR republic

By Wendy Ryan

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/28/91

WASHINGTON, DC (BP) -- The Baptist World Alliance has appealed to President Bush to place the issue of religious freedom for the Georgian Republic and other USSR republics on the agenda when he meets with the President of the Republic of Georgia later this month.

In a letter to Bush, the General Secretary of the BWA, Denton Lotz, appealed to the President "on behalf of our Baptist family in the Soviet Union" to use his influence "to see that religious freedom is upheld, not only in Georgia, but other republics in the USSR where we have received disturbing reports of Baptist buildings being destroyed and literature being confiscated." The latter has been reported from Moldavia.

Lotz told Bush the BWA had received reports the recent Law on Freedom of Conscience in the Soviet Union might not be applicable to all republics and Georgia was one of those.

Lotz made his appeal to Bush because of the President's firm stand on religious freedom.

The BWA appeal to Bush was made on the basis of a report from Karl Heinz Walter, BWA European regional secretary who visited the Soviet Union earlier this month. He had been given assurances by leaders in the Georgian Republic that religious freedom was intended for all, but Baptists have been reported to have lost their jobs and apartments because of their faith.

During his visits with the Orthodox Patriarch of all Georgia, Ilia II and the chairman of the Supreme Council of the republic, Akaki T. Asatiani, Walter was assured by both leaders that religious freedom and equality of all Christian denominations will be guaranteed in the Georgian Republic.

"I will look very carefully into it to be sure that religious freedom and equality of all Christian denominations will be guaranteed" said the Patriarch in response to Walter's concern about disparaging remarks about Baptists made by an Orthodox priest on a radio program. There had also been reports some government leaders would try to declare the Georgian Orthodox Church as the only acceptable Christian religion.

Asatiani also explained the delay of the religious freedom law in the Georgian Republic was due to current work on a citizenship law. When this is completed, he said, other laws, including the religious freedom law will follow.

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On the matter of buildings for Baptists in Georgia, the four Baptist groups in Tbilisi, who for many years have shared one building, each need a building, but Asatiani, saying that four would be too much at one time could only promise one new building.

"We are aware of the tremendous upheavals in the government of the USSR and especially the republics," said Lotz. "It is our concern to keep before the newly emerging independent republics the need for religious freedom. It is absolutely necessary the Law on Freedom of Conscience passed by the Supreme Soviet be approved by all the republics."

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CLC staffer testifies
against sports gambling

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
6/28/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--In testimony before a Senate subcommittee, a staff member of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has called on Congress to pass legislation halting the spread of sports gambling.

James A. Smith, the commission's director of government relations, said in his testimony the CLC "strongly supports" a bill prohibiting the sanctioning of sports lotteries and other forms of sports gambling by states in which such games are not yet permitted. Sports gambling is legal only in Nevada, Oregon and Delaware.

Smith delivered his testimony June 26 to the Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights and Trademarks of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"The horse has left the barn in Oregon," he said. "It has left the barn in Nevada. Congress should 'close the barn door' on legalized sports gambling elsewhere before it is too late."

The Southern Baptist Convention historically has favored restricting gambling, and the CLC opposes gambling in any form, Smith said.

"Sports gambling harms the poor and is especially pernicious because its primary targets are young people," he said. "Federal action is warranted because of the national scope of professional and amateur sports and the role of sports in American life.

"There are no winners in sports gambling, only losers," Smith told the subcommittee.

The Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (S. 474) was introduced by Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D.-Ariz. Similar legislation (H.R. 74) has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. John Bryant, D.-Tex., and Rep. Hamilton Fish, R.-N.Y.

Others who testified on behalf of the Senate bill were Sen. Bill Bradley, D.-N.J., a former college and professional basketball player; Mike Singletary, middle linebacker for the National Football League's Chicago Bears, and the commissioners of three professional sports leagues, Paul Tagliabue of the NFL, Fay Vincent of major league baseball and David Stern of the National Basketball Association.

Commissioners said the proliferation of sports gambling would call into question the integrity of athletes and would lead fans to become more interested in winning bets than in their teams winning games.

Young persons are the "true victims" of sports gambling, said Singletary, a former player for Baylor University.

"State-legalized sports betting makes a mockery of an athlete's sacrifices and commitments and undermines our ability to set a positive example for young people," Singletary said in his testimony.

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Former pro football player Ben Davidson testified against the legislation. Wagering on games already is prevalent and should be controlled by the states rather than organized crime, he said.

James Davey, director of the Oregon Lottery, said in his testimony the professional sports leagues are hypocritical in the concerns they express about gambling and youth. The leagues have not acted to distance their sports and participants from gambling connections, he said. The leagues should "eliminate beer and alcohol advertising from their broadcasts and the stadiums" if they truly are concerned about young persons, Davey said.

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Pressure heats up
for personal burnout

By Charles Willis

F-SSB

Baptist Press
6/28/91

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The pressure on middle class lifestyles is heating up every year, with accelerated expectations to accomplish "everything," a psychologist, writer and seminar leader said during Church Music Leadership Conference.

Bruce Baldwin of Direction Dynamics in Wilmington, N.C., told church musicians at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center that myths surrounding burnout prevent many persons from diagnosing lifestyle problems.

"The idea that the only people who are vulnerable to stress are dyed-in-the-wool workaholics," Baldwin said, "is the first erroneous idea society has gotten.

Many who suffer from stress are nice, well-adjusted persons, but they have a value system that places unrealistic expectations on them, he continued.

The system includes "I am a responsible person; I have responsibilities in every area of my life; I will meet those responsibilities and do them well."

"People begin to feel that system backfire at about age 30," he observed, "and by age 35 they are basket cases. It just gets worse and worse until the person does something about it."

Another myth, he said, is that burnout shows up in the workplace, in the quality and quantity of work.

"Actually," Baldwin observed, "burnout victims do the work and do it well, regardless of how they feel. The problem shows up as a latent deterioration in the quality of life seen when you walk in their homes."

He said persons with burnout suffer depression when hard work does not reap a reward, and many of them postpone pleasure in an effort to attain higher goals.

"They continue to postpone pleasure for a lifetime," he said. "They don't know how to give themselves a little bit of the good life. They reach retirement with no activities or friends, and they sit alone drawing a good pension in a paid-up house."

Another work ethic that can lead to burnout is that one must always have something to show for time spent, he said. A person who cannot do "absolutely nothing" for 30 minutes suffers from guilt that is "a pathological byproduct of an overlearned ethic."

Yet another work ethic is that "rewards come at end points. For children, allowances come at the end of the week or when chores are completed," Baldwin said. "For adults, payday comes at the end of a week or month.

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"If you are oriented toward end points, you cannot relax. Relaxation demands you forget about end points and enjoy experiences," he added.

"As we age, our perception of the passage of time speeds up, and our priorities change," he continued. "We move from an age of having friends and fun to being obsessed with how to get everything done in order to get up the next day and go through the same thing again. As we grow professionally, work expands. We get paid to do the job, and nobody cares how long it takes us to do it.

"The people who used to take off for a weekend on an hour's notice now require four to six weeks of careful planning to leave town," he said.

Burnout is not being continually tense, Baldwin maintained.

"It is a low-level depression resulting from a value system of responsibility, the feeling of more things to get done and the limitation of 24 hours in a day," he said. "It makes you feel bad in every area of your life. And this has a corrosive effect on self-esteem."

The burnout pattern, Baldwin said, includes:

- little satisfaction in work, coupled with escape fantasies;
- chronic fatigue that is not helped by sleep; pressure expressed by anger;
- a progressive need to withdraw and isolate oneself;
- in some persons, particularly men, a chronic pattern of indiscriminate television watching; and
- a troubled marriage marked by a loss of intimacy and conversation, except for discussions of business and schedules.

Aside from obvious steps of good nutrition, sleep and exercise, Baldwin said the cure for burnout begins with "bringing back the quality of life at home." The process, he said, requires eight to 10 months to reverse bad habits and make changes stick.

"Time, talking, touching and trust" are Baldwin's recommendations for couples to re-establish communication. His rules include having conversations which avoid discussions of work, children, schedules or money.

He encouraged ministers to protect time together with their spouses and to set aside regular times for rest and relaxation. While rest is always passive, he observed, relaxation can be passive or active.

"Passive relaxation is a retreat inside yourself -- meditative. Prayer is a physically healthy relaxation technique that has spiritual benefits," he said. "And it is your time for you.

"Active relaxation is true play," he continued. "You can use tremendous amounts of physical energy, and relax emotionally."

True relaxation is the ability to allow yourself to get very deeply, very pleasantly involved in an activity that is valued primarily for the pleasure of the experience, he said.

Church music leadership conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department.

Missionaries, Filipinos
team up in relief effort

By Marty Croll

N.F.M.B.

Baptist Press
6/28/91

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries have joined forces with Baptists on Luzon, the northernmost island in the Philippines, to supply food and medical help to victims of Mount Pinatubo.

Pinatubo began erupting June 9 for the first time in 600 years, blowing ash and sand into the area for miles around, with some clouds of ash reaching the Asian mainland. Heavy rains turned the volcanic debris into gooey sludge. Missionaries expect to seek Southern Baptist relief funds to help rebuild homes and churches damaged after the weight of the sludge collapsed roofs.

But the "priority right now is food and medicine," said missionary administrator Sam Waldron. In fact, some damaged churches have become relief distribution points.

Member churches of the Luzon Baptist Convention are distributing food, money, clothing, soap and other relief goods. Missionaries, in cooperation with the convention, are distributing three tractor-trailer-loads of rice and other food to victims and refugees driven from their homes by the volcano. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has released \$50,000 in relief funds to help provide food and medicine.

A medical team of missionaries and Filipinos will work north of Manila in the Olongapo and San Marcelino areas, which bore the brunt of the volcanic eruptions. The team, headed by missionary Julia Yost, a nurse from Summerville, S.C., will aim its work at distributing milk and alleviating fever and diarrhea among children. Contaminated water and poor sanitation have created an environment for diarrhea, which causes dehydration that can be quickly fatal to children.

At one point officials estimated 200,000 refugees had streamed into Manila to escape the danger. Many cannot return home because of damage in their communities. By June 26 at least 338 people had been reported killed by the eruptions and their aftermath. Meanwhile, the mountain continues to blow periodically.

Scientists predict smaller eruptions will continue for years.