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Attacks on evangelicals
intensifying in Ethiopia

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
9/29/92

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--Evangelical Christians face intensified persecution in Ethiopia, according to reports reaching missionaries.

The persecution allegedly is being instigated by members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the official religion of Ethiopia for hundreds of years before the communist takeover in the mid-1970s.

Violence directed at "Pentays" (a derogatory term for any evangelical believer, even those not belonging to Pentecostal churches) has been denounced by some Coptic church officials. But incidents are reported regularly, especially in remote areas.

The renewed attacks come little more than a year after the fall of the former communist government ended official suppression of religion.

The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front proclaimed complete religious freedom in its June 1991 charter. Evangelical Christians seized the opportunity to begin passing out tracts and preaching in the streets of the capital, Addis Ababa.

But within the past two months, Baptist missionaries in the country have reported the following incidents:

- Orthodox mobs stoned the houses of Baptist believers.
- Baptist women have been stoned when they go to a village spring to draw water. Often the missiles are aimed at their clay water pots.
- An Orthodox group armed with poles attacked the house of a Baptist and tried to tear it down but failed.
- Many high school-age Baptists have been kicked out of their homes by their non-evangelical parents. One young man said his Orthodox father took his Bible, shredded it and burned it in front of him before ordering him out with only the clothes he was wearing.
- Numerous merchants reportedly have refused to sell grain to "Pentays."

Appeals to authorities of the young government for protection usually get at least a verbal commitment to enforcing the guarantee of religious freedom. But the government is besieged by a shattered economy, rising ethnic tensions and continued armed resistance in parts of the country. It often does not have the resources -- or in some places the interest -- to intervene in what it considers "religious squabbles."

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Officials in a village in Shoa province told evangelicals, "We had to fight for what we got. You will have to fight for yours."

Some Orthodox leaders have been quoted as saying it would be better for people to become Muslim rather than "Pentays." They feel evangelicals are "Mary haters" who have been deceived into placing the Protestant Bible above the Orthodox Bible (which includes numerous other books) and writings such as the Book of Mary, which the Coptic church accepts as holy.

Adherents to the Orthodox faith make up an estimated 50 percent of the Ethiopian population while Muslims are estimated at between 40 and 45 percent. Evangelical Christians and followers of African traditional religions make up most of the rest.

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Prof looked beyond math
to find faith in Christ

By Douglas Hollinger

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--He has studied with leading mathematicians at Oxford and MIT, published definitive books in his chosen field and once solved a mathematical problem which stymied the world's best for 22 years.

But Robert S. Doran, chair of Texas Christian University's mathematics department, will tell you himself: "I had nothing whatsoever before I accepted Christ."

Doran began teaching math at TCU in 1969. Having discovered a natural talent for theoretical mathematics, Doran soon grew to love the rarefied atmosphere of academic research.

"That was one of the things that caused me to not see God, because mathematics became so important to me and mathematics is based on proof and demonstration," he recalls. "And if you can't demonstrate it, you don't believe it."

Doran's breakthrough in mathematics, his solution to the "Kaplansky problem," was published in 1972. But his most important breakthrough came the following year.

Doran and his wife of 33 years, Shirley, who is his secretary at TCU in Fort Worth, were invited by a neighbor to revival services at what was then known as Birchman Avenue Baptist Church (now Birchman Baptist).

"I told her no three times during one week when she asked me to go, and I always had an excuse."

The neighbor, Cindy Brown, persisted. Doran finally suggested that the family attend Friday night's service to appease Brown.

"Shirley said no three times herself to me before the hour was out. Now she was angry and I was angry and neither of us wanted to go, but I was going to assert myself."

Spotting a graduate student of his in the crowd, Doran talked math and then settled in for a dull evening.

Having outlined the common idea that obeying the Ten Commandments is the way to get to heaven, the evangelist "turned around and said he never heard of a quicker recipe to go to hell. And I thought, 'Now that's an interesting paradox at least,'" and he began listening more intently.

Doran -- president of the association of members of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, former academic home to Albert Einstein and Robert Oppenheimer -- grins readily when he recalls how a preacher solved a math professor's greatest problem.

"So what is the law for? It's to reveal you're a sinner; that's what it's for. And for the first time I saw the law as a mirror that reflects what we are, not something you attain to.

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"And then he ushered in Jesus Christ and the solution to the problem. And I said, 'My goodness, this all makes sense for the first time.'"

Unsure of what to do, Doran noticed Brown making her way to his wife who was crying.

"All of the sudden Shirley stood up and looked at me and said, 'I need Jesus in my life.' And I thought, 'Wow! Here I have had the revelation that Jesus Christ is the God of the universe, and that he died for me, and I'm going to stand here and think about this another day. Could there be any more pride in a person's life than that?'"

"I released it all, and I took her hand and we went forward as children. That was the radical change in my life."

Professor Doran -- since showered with numerous teaching awards, including 1989 Texas Professor of the Year, awarded by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, and TCU's Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award -- began to change in the classroom as well.

"My view of human beings was radically transformed. They weren't just another person to honk your horn at -- this was a person whom God loved so much that he died for that person, that person, that person. And I saw my students that way. I couldn't teach them the same anymore."

Doran has modified his teaching to create an atmosphere of spontaneity and love in the classroom; to start the term he researches the meaning of each student's first name as a way of showing interest in each individual. He remembers the first time he wrote his trademark "thought for the day" on the chalkboard.

"I was halfway through a calculus class and the thought came into my mind: 'You're supposed to share something about God to this class.'"

"Finally I just stopped and said to the class, 'I'm going to put something on the chalkboard that will surprise you, so get ready, put your pencils down.' What I put up was, 'The fundamental question is not whether or not God is, but whether or not he is first in your life.'"

Now he tells students "that if I believe what I say, that my life should reflect it in my daily activities with you. I say this to my students on the first day, so I put myself on the line as a Christian."

Though some people may see mathematics as hostile to Christianity, Doran uses math to explain the spiritual.

"If you only try to understand what you can with your mind, you are going to miss truth. I can show in a calculus course that here's an example that's impossible to understand and yet it's true. It is indescribable truth."

"Isn't it interesting about the parallel between the universe being created, we're told scripturally, out of nothing and that mathematics can actually be demonstrated to be created out of, not nothing, but the set which has nothing in it, which is very close to nothing. So I use mathematics today as a very strong tool for God."

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Douglas Hollinger is a free-lance writer in Fort Worth, Texas. (BP) photo available upon request from TCU's mathematics department, (817) 921-7335.

Prison chaplains seek churches
willing to assist ex-convicts

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
9/29/92

ATLANTA (BP)--A new set of clothes, \$70 and a prison record is hardly a recipe for success. Yet inmates are frequently released from prison with little else.

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Churches willing to welcome former inmates and church members willing to invest time in the lives of released prisoners can be the missing ingredients in their otherwise bleak future, say Southern Baptist prison chaplains.

Newly released prisoners "have nothing to do and no place to go," says Joseph L. Crichton, chaplain at the Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in Petros, Tenn.

Consequently many prisoners return to crime. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that three-fourths of people released from prison are re-arrested within five years.

"Our goal (with after-care ministries) is to reduce that return rate but the ultimate goal is to get a life straightened out," Crichton says.

People who make Christian commitments in prison usually become involved in the prison's chapel program, chaplains say. When inmates are released, they may be disappointed when they look for similar fellowship in a church.

"To go to church and not be received is a terrible blow," says Joe Valenzuela, chaplain for the California Department of Corrections. "We forget how sensitive Christ was to prisoners."

A joint venture in Texas has produced a congregation of former prisoners, their families and families of people who are still in prison.

The group began meeting in May at College Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Now 90 people attend the Monday night service which includes a light meal followed by praise and worship.

"This is an experiment," says Bob Cox, director of church and community ministries for Tarrant Baptist Association in Fort Worth. He says the mission was needed because "people in our target group often do not feel comfortable in the traditional Southern Baptist church."

To ease the transition from prison to freedom, some chaplains match volunteers with soon-to-be-released prisoners.

Rory Murphy, senior chaplain at the William P. Clements prison in Amarillo, Texas, looks for "mentors" to spend two hours with a prisoner once a month.

"Mentors come in and talk about whatever," Murphy says. "At first the inmates don't feel like they can relate to a person in the square society -- law-abiding, church-going citizens who pay taxes."

"Prisoners say, 'I'm scared. I don't know what to say.' But if they stick to the mentor program, a relationship develops."

One prisoner Murphy met had lived on the streets virtually all his life. He hitchhiked by himself from place to place. "He never had a significant relationship in his life," Murphy says. "But he stayed in the mentor program, and he's changed."

Crichton works with a similar program in Tennessee, but it focuses on church rather than individual sponsors. Crichton says two difficulties are establishing relationships and recruiting volunteers.

"The volunteer doesn't know if the prisoner is telling the truth. And the prisoner doubts the volunteer," Crichton says. "The difficulty is building a relationship on mistrust."

Yet he is convinced the program would work if enough churches would volunteer. He says he would like to find one volunteer for each of Tennessee's 22 state institutions to recruit participating churches.

In California, Valenzuela works with the Prison Fellowship program called "66." It calls for volunteers to work with prisoners for six months before they are released and six months after they are released. Victory Outreach, a halfway house for Hispanic prisoners, is another resource Valenzuela uses.

Chaplains do not promise volunteers their work will be easy. Chaplains screen inmates before referring them to mentor programs, but they note that prisoners are still dealing with experiences that led them to criminal activity.

"Seventy to 80 percent of these guys had no chance" because they were raised in unhealthy environments, Valenzuela says. "They had no love, no discipline."

Crichton says 90 percent of the prisoners he meets suffered some traumatic incident during puberty that continues to affect them.

While it can be difficult, chaplains say it is no less than Christ expects. "If you live in a city where there is a prison and you're not doing anything, something is wrong," Valenzuela says.

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Residential ministry offers
second chance to ex-prisoners

By Sarah Zimmerman

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DALLAS (BP)--A Dallas apartment complex has an unusual requirement of its residents: At least one person in each unit must be a former inmate.

The strategy is designed to teach ex-prisoners the disciplines they need for a crime-free, Christ-centered life.

Since January 1988, 115 former prisoners have completed the highly structured program of Exodus Ministry, Inc. Only five have returned to prison, says Mike Rouse, executive director.

Prisoners cannot be released and expected to be successful without help, he says.

"People are released from prison and told to live normally in society. They didn't before they were arrested. They didn't while they were in prison. How are they supposed to now?" Rouse asks.

Exodus Ministry is a product of the Mega Focus Cities strategy to identify needs in the nation's largest metropolitan areas, Rouse says. Initial funding was a joint venture between the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Baptist General Convention of Texas. The apartment building was purchased for the ministry by Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas.

Prisoners are referred to Exodus by people working in corrections such as chaplains, wardens and parole officers. Most of the residents were in prison two years or less, and all have children.

Families can stay in one of the 17 apartment units six months without paying rent or utilities. Exodus Ministry also buys the families' first week of groceries.

The financial help "takes the pressure off," Rouse says. It helps them resist the temptation to resort to crime when they've run out of money and still haven't found a job.

In addition to financial freedom, Exodus is a place for families to be reunited after the prison term. Children and parents, as well as husbands and wives, get to know each other again.

Exodus also provides stability and structure.

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"For most people, this is the first time in their lives to have six months of stability. We had one mother whose 14-year-old son had never gone to the same school an entire year," Rouse says.

Every Monday evening residents are required to attend homemaking classes where topics range from parenting skills to first aid techniques and cooking tips.

On Tuesday night, residents have the option of attending literacy training or tutoring to help them earn the equivalent of a high school diploma.

Every Thursday they must attend budget classes and give an account of every penny they spend, even 10 cents for a piece of candy, resident Sidney Alexander says.

During the day, residents look for work. Volunteers help assess the ex-prisoners' skills and teach them how to get a job, from filling out an application to using the telephone to find job leads.

"The beauty of Exodus is that it gives everyone in the church a way to reach out to an ex-offender," Rouse says.

Volunteers provide child care during the evening classes and help lead the budgeting and homemaking classes. Volunteers make birthday cakes for children, some offer free hair cuts, others give free beauty makeovers to the women.

Church groups equip each apartment with everything from linens to furniture and wall hangings. Residents who successfully complete the program take all the items with them when they leave.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Answer to missionaries' prayer
comes from surprising direction

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
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MANZINI, Swaziland (BP)--Missionaries Don and Linda Bradley prayed for help with an evangelistic crusade in a Mozambican refugee camp -- and looked west for the answer.

But the prayer request didn't produce Southern Baptist volunteers from the United States. Instead the response came from the south -- from 14 Indian Baptists in South Africa who didn't even know the Bradleys needed assistance.

Last December Bradley told Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrator John Faulkner of the need for volunteers to help in a summer crusade. They discussed the difficulties but agreed to pray.

Two weeks later Peggie Moodley, a South African businessman and a stranger to Bradley, knocked on the missionary's door. He asked if a group of South African Indian Baptists he represented could work in the refugee camp.

"We wouldn't even have been at home except our car broke down," Bradley recounted. "We were disappointed about missing a Christmas party at the local prison. But we started praising God when we realized how he had answered our prayers."

Crowds of more than 400 flooded Malindza Baptist Church during the recent four-day crusade at the refugee camp. Hundreds of people responded to spiritual invitations, including 22 adults who professed faith in Christ. Each is now completing a three-month class for new believers.

"We figured Baptists from six different countries and three continents combined their spiritual gifts to follow the Great Commission in a dusty refugee camp," said Bradley.

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That international count included the Mozambican congregation; Angolan pastor Isac Silvano, who started the church; the American missionaries; the volunteers (who did double duty representing South Africa and India); and Swaziland Baptists, whose country houses the refugee camp.

Baptists have worked in Swaziland -- an ancient African kingdom still ruled by a monarch and surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique -- only since 1983. Southern Baptists have aided the Malindza refugee camp since 1984, when the Foreign Mission Board financed a \$30,000 water system. Other gifts of food, blankets, tents and cooking pots have pushed the total Southern Baptist contributions to more than \$90,000.

But the needs of the 15,000 refugees at the camp overwhelmed local personnel and resources.

The 10 men and four women volunteers worked with individual groups at the camp during the day, including clinic and health education classes led by nurse Parimala Jeremiah. At joint worship services each evening, up to 60 people stood outside the 900-square-foot church, looking in over the half-walls to hear Indian pastors Victor Rhandram and Rodney Ragwan preach.

The multinational composition of the situation didn't escape Moises Massinga, the Mozambican pastor of the camp church.

"No matter what color we are, we all get saved the same way," he pointed out. "Isn't it thrilling and amazing -- only through the blood of Jesus. It's the same for Indians, Mozambicans and Americans."

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Southeastern prof-pastor
can speak from experience

By Jon Walker

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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--"There is nothing more exciting than to be sitting with someone who is lost, and after sharing the gospel, seeing that person invite Christ into his heart," said Jim Cogdill, assistant professor of church growth and evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"In the twinkling of an eye, I see him go from death to life."

Cogdill said he believes a seminary professor should demonstrate what he teaches, and it is not uncommon to see him involved in one-on-one evangelism in the communities surrounding the Wake Forest, N.C., campus. He said he not only wants to teach his students how to be vital and effective in their Christian witness, he also wants them to get out and "DO IT."

"One of the great joys I have is when a student comes to me who has not really been trained in evangelism, but he has a heart for it and says to me, 'I have a friend who's lost. Would you go with me to share the gospel with him?'" Cogdill said. "I hope by doing that I not only teach the student about evangelism, but I also want him to catch a vision for evangelism. I hope he will get excited and start to say, 'I can do that. I want to do that!'"

Cogdill also is full-time pastor of Wake Crossroads Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. He said it has required creativity to manage a full-time pastorate as well as a teaching position at Southeastern. However, he said both roles have complemented each other and kept him on the forefront of church growth and evangelism.

"So much of the church growth theory I teach at the seminary I can apply on a day-to-day basis at the church," Cogdill said. "Sometimes new ideas and theories don't work out, and if that happens, I have a responsibility to the church not to keep doing it. On the other hand, that allows me to come back to the classroom and say, 'Here is a methodology in church growth or evangelism and this is what happened when I tried to implement it.'"

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Cogdill said his congregation has been supportive when he has introduced new church growth methods. Wake Crossroads Baptist Church has grown from 900 members to 1,100 members in the two and a half years Cogdill has been pastor. Sunday school has grown from 225 to 350.

Southeastern student Joe Haigler said he appreciates Cogdill's dual role as professor and pastor because "when he teaches he says, 'Here's what happened last week,' not 'Here's what happened when I was a pastor.'"

Wake Crossroads member Lisa Branch said she believes Cogdill's involvement at the seminary allows him to interact with more people. "He uses so many real-life analogies," she said. "He really speaks to the average Joe and you can see (by the growth of Wake Crossroads) that what he teaches really works."

Many members of the Southeastern family are active in Cogdill's church. He said preaching to fellow professors and future pastors keeps him on his toes, but he also has to be careful when he is teaching in the classroom. "Whenever I am lecturing on a particular point, especially if it's a precise method, I am constantly aware that there is a good chance someone in the classroom also sits in a pew of my church, so there is no room for exaggeration," he said.

So what does the church growth and evangelism professor say will help a church grow?

-- Recognize your church is made up of more than one group of people, and different groups have different interests.

-- Because you are reaching out to more than one group of people, use several different methods of evangelism.

-- Know the demographics surrounding your church and tailor your outreach methods to the people God has placed around you. For instance, if your community is full of young couples, you will need to incorporate programs into your church that cater to couples with young children.

-- Make long-range plans and goals for the church to work toward.

-- Train your people in presenting the gospel in a simple, effective manner. Have at least one program of confrontational evangelism such as Continuing Witness Training or Evangelism Explosion. Continually encourage the people of your church to present the gospel and give them opportunities to present the gospel.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southeastern Seminary.

'It was just a sea of hands,'
seminarians report from Romania

By Jon Walker

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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--"It was just a sea of hands as we were passing out tracts. You couldn't even look up to see who you were giving the tracts to. You just had to give them out as fast as you could," said Dudley Davis, one of 10 Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary students sharing the gospel in the Romanian cities of Buzau and Nehoiu this summer.

"There's no joy (in Romania), there's no hope and, yet, the people were so eager to get the tracts," Davis said. "That indicates there is a hunger there for something. We planted seeds, but to really get it done, somebody would have to spend a lifetime."

"People are very hungry to have Bibles, tracts and information," fellow student Rob Evans noted, "but a lot of people we witnessed to did not really understand about a personal relationship with Christ."

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Southeastern professor Phil Roberts said the mission team gave out more than 14,000 tracts and 3,000 Bibles as they shared Jesus Christ with Romanians.

Roberts said the most significant time the team spent was sharing the gospel in street preaching. He said usually 70-80 people would stop to listen as the group sang or preached. Roberts said the crowds "soaked up" what the team had to say. When a response was called for, often 20 or more people raised their hands to pray to receive Christ, Roberts said.

The Southeastern mission team also held evangelistic meetings in the evenings that Roberts said started small but eventually grew. He said the children's ministry offered in these meetings became quite popular.

"The last night," Roberts said, "all the children came up in a big mass choir and quoted John 3:16 and then sang several Bible choruses they'd learned. I imagine, for most of them, it was the first time ever they'd been in church."

One of the reasons Roberts wanted to take a mission team to Buzau was that, despite its population of about 100,000, there are only "nine or 10 evangelical" Christians in the whole community. Romania is dominated by members of the Romanian branch of Eastern Orthodoxy who believe salvation comes through the church.

Roberts said part of the mission team's purpose was to encourage church planter Daniel Cocos, who not only is pastor of a small Baptist church in the city but also has a mission church in a nearby village. In two years of ministry Cocos has had 10 converts.

His 11th convert came while the mission team was present. Cocos gave a Bible to Katrina, the maid in the hotel where the team was staying.

When members of the team saw her the next day, she already had read all the gospels and started into Paul's letters. She said she had some questions about what she had read. Cocos not only answered her questions but led her to the Lord.

Southeastern team member Ken Welborn said Katrina is studying to be a social worker. "The beauty of that is now she is going to be a Christian social worker in orphanages where the need is so great."

Roberts said another purpose for these seminary mission trips is to help the students develop a heart for the world, even if they serve the rest of their ministry in a local church.

Team member Anthony Allen said he views missions differently now. "There's a lot of work and planning for missions. It's not just something you go out and do. There has to be a plan that meets specific people's needs. We need to understand them, their culture, even their language, if we are going to make a long-range impact."

Southeastern student Ken Welborn added, "I think for the most part we're at a loss as to how to get involved in such a big thing (as world missions) and yet there are so many little ways we can get involved if we have just a little more understanding."

As an example, Welborn pointed out a church in the United States could support a Romanian seminary student for \$40 a month. Welborn said a U.S. church might be able to raise that amount of money with relative ease but in Romania it would be like asking for \$40,000 a month.