

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

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

May 18, 1992

92-85

**Baptist World Alliance
to target global racism**

By Wendy Ryan

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance is appointing a Special Commission of Baptists Against Racism to study the causes of racism, the biblical answers to racism and what Baptists can do to help defeat racism.

Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said it is time "Baptists around the world make a strong statement against racism by word and deed."

The impetus for the commission was the recent Los Angeles riots after the Rodney King verdict, Lotz said, but added "it also is continuing conflicts" in the former republics of Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, South Africa and the Middle East.

"Racism is alive and well around the world," Lotz said, "and all of these conflicts testify to the tragic dehumanization and loss of life brought on by it. As Baptists around the world we protest with a loud NO to racism because the Bible clearly speaks against it."

Lotz, who is appointing the commission, said it will consist of Baptists leaders worldwide, many from countries currently embroiled in racial and ethnic conflict. The commission is to present a report and recommendations when the BWA General Council meets in August 1993 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Lotz called on Baptists around the world to pray that Baptists, who are one of the most widespread Protestant groups in more than 200 countries, "may take a lead in combatting racism."

--30--

NOTE TO EDITORS: The Richmond bureau of Baptist Press has sent photos to accompany the following five stories by Africa correspondent Craig Bird on missions and Islam in Africa. They can be used individually or in combination.

**False concepts build barriers
between Muslims and Christians**

By Craig Bird

**Baptist Press
5/18/92**

MOMBASA, Kenya (BP)--To paraphrase: How will they hear unless they listen? And how will they listen unless you know the truth about what they believe?

Misconceptions about Islam pile unnecessary sandbags atop already seemingly insurmountable differences between Muslims and Christians.

"One of the big problems is that each group believes false things about each other," points out Miyawa Abuyeka, youth chairman of Timbwani Baptist Church in Mombasa, Kenya. "For example, most African Christians think the reason Muslims don't eat pork is because pigs rooted around the grave of (Islam's prophet) Muhammad -- but that's false. It's a dietary law just like among Jews."

Most Christians in the United States likely equate "Muslim" with what they see on the nightly news from Iran, Iraq and Lebanon -- and are more likely to have no idea what a Muslim believes than to have incorrect information.

--more--

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that people who call themselves "Muslim" are just as diverse as people who call themselves "Christian," explained Charles Bedenbaugh, a Southern Baptist missionary in Tanzania for 31 years before he died last year from cancer. The two major divisions are Sunni and Shiite -- a split that developed soon after the death of Muhammad over how the mantle of spiritual leadership should fall. The Sunni sect is the largest but the Shiite sect is the one most recognized by Americans. The Iranian government is led by Shiites; Saudi Arabia by Sunnis.

Within, alongside and perhaps outside these two major divisions are uncounted sects focused on different verses of the Koran or defending differing interpretations of key verses. In fact, the most aggressive "Muslim missionaries" are from the Ahmadiyya sect. It is banned in Pakistan and Indonesia and shunned by mainline Muslims the world over because it draws some of its religious principles from the sect's founder. Other Muslims say this means, "They don't really believe Muhammad was the last prophet."

Which points out: You can't make too many blanket statements about Muslims that will be universally true for all who pray toward Mecca.

Among the handful of blanket statements true about Islamic beliefs: There's one sovereign God (monotheism) and his final revelation was the Koran delivered through the Prophet Muhammad; Islam is the only true faith; salvation is earned by good works and following Koranic teachings; angels are God's messengers and there are evil spirits opposing them; mankind will be assigned to heaven or hell on judgment day after being judged for good deeds and bad; and a pilgrimage to Mecca, if you can afford it, is mandatory.

But there are many other things that "most" Muslims hold to be true. Here are 10 things east African Muslims have shared with Christians acquaintances as being "true." Most Muslims probably would concur.

1) Jesus was born to a virgin named Mary, lived a perfect life and ascended into heaven without dying (a substitute died on the cross, they say). At judgment Jesus will return to declare the fate of all mankind but Muhammad will be there to speak on behalf of Muslims. In the Koran, Jesus is identified as Isa ben Miriam or Jesus, son of Mary.

2) The "comforter" Jesus said would be sent by God after he was no longer on earth was the prophet Muhammad.

3) There's no security of salvation until the final judgment. A Christian who says he is saved will be accused of insulting the power of God.

4) Sin is in things -- eating pork, having a photograph or a statue in your home (idol worship is prohibited), not fasting, etc. -- and not in attitudes. Fear is an acceptable motivation to serve Allah as well as love.

5) Abraham was tested in the wilderness to slay his son -- Ishmael, not Isaac.

6) Muslims should be moral and not lie, cheat, drink, abuse drugs, etc.

7) An evil figure, much like the antichrist of Revelation, will lead a reign of terror toward the end of time but will be defeated. Shiites believe when there are 313 "faithfuls" in the world the 12th Imam will appear, collect a huge army and conquer the world. Jesus could fulfill that role. But that time appears to be in the future since Shiites can't identify more than 10 "faithfuls" alive today. A faithful is one who has reached the highest levels of spiritual purity and knowledge.

--more--

8) Charity to the less fortunate is highly rewarded by God.

9) Women should be protected and modest. Some sects prohibit women from wearing the veil, shawl and robes so familiar on American television. Others require it. Some even require complete covering, including the eyes.

10) Most Muslim sects do not believe in or practice evangelism. They defend their community against any outside religious influence and rear their children in the faith but do not seek, or sometimes even welcome, converts.

--30--

Work among Africa Muslims tough
despite growing responsiveness

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/18/92

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--"Easier" is a relative term especially when it refers to Christian ministries to Muslims in east Africa.

More Muslims are converting to Christianity in east Africa but such switches are still unusual. And most of the time they're far from easy.

The currents of Islam run deep through the cultural streams of the Kenya-Tanzania coast. A converted Muslim remains a reason for special celebration in the Christian community. Social and economic persecution -- and often physical abuse -- of such converts remains very real.

Mamburi, a small town on the northern coast of Kenya, is a good example. "Jesus is the Savior of the world but we're defeated in this place," admitted a weary and discouraged Sam Charo, lay leader of a Baptist effort to plant a church in Mamburi. The handful of Christians have been driven physically more than half a mile from the town and "the elders have given us a big problem in our life," Charo said. "We really want them to know about Jesus but we haven't won anyone who's a Muslim."

But Charo and thousands of other Christians are determined to keep on trying. "The way to bring Muslims to Christianity is the way of love," said Rockmass Yaa, a young Baptist pastor in Malindi, Kenya. "I don't struggle with them to become Christian. I share the gospel with them in love -- so it is not easy for them to get angry."

"We need to know about (Muslims) as well as they know themselves," added Daniel Mahimbo, a former Muslim who directs the stewardship and evangelism department of the Baptist Convention of Tanzania. "Some of my relatives don't know I eat pork -- and I won't eat it in front of them. When you tell them you love them they want to see action. It may take a long time for them to believe us but that's the way."

Occasional conflicts do occur but such incidents -- despite grabbing publicity -- are on the fringes of interaction between Christians and Muslims. Typical relationships are polite and civil. Friendships often run deep and span decades.

Most Muslims who haven't heard the Christian gospel or reject it are good, moral people whose ethnic-tribal identity is interwoven with Islam. They're not overtly antagonistic to Christianity -- they just don't see any need to adopt a "white man's religion" so foreign to their culture.

"If you go to war with a resistant people then they'll war back," pointed out Clay Coursey, a veteran Southern Baptist missionary church planter. "But you can share your faith if you care enough to learn what topics to avoid because they make Muslims so angry they won't listen, and what subjects are open."

Most African Christians and missionaries agree that confrontational, overly aggressive evangelism among Muslims often intensifies resistance instead of knocking down barriers.

--more--

"We have found mass meetings ineffective among the Digo (a tribe more than 97 percent Muslim)," explained Gary Morgan, a Conservative Baptist missionary in Kenya. "Rallies provide a focal point for opposition."

Muslims who attend openly evangelistic rallies often come for one of two reasons. Most with sincere questions about the validity of Christianity "want to see healings," a Tanzania pastor said. But others come simply to learn about Christianity in order to better defend Islam. Some make a public profession of faith in Christ only to begin arguing with the pastor when the group of new believers meets for counseling after the service.

The most common argument is the description of Jesus as "the Son of God." Educated Muslims know the Koran, the holy book of Islam, teaches that Jesus was born to a virgin mother named Mary, lived a perfect life and will return, first to defeat an evil dictator (much like the antichrist of Revelation) and then assign all men their eternal destinies at the final judgment.

But mention of "Son of God" is a sure way to terminate any discussion because "to a Muslim that term means God had sexual intercourse with Mary," Coursey added. "They consider it a blasphemy against Allah to say he could have a son in the human manner ... We don't mean it that way but that's what they hear. We need to find other ways to express the spiritual truth without making them so angry they won't listen."

Until Muslims understand what he means, Coursey uses the Swahili phrase for "power of God" instead of son. "Jesus was born by the 'uwezo' of God," Coursey explained. "He was born to a human mother through the power of God, because of the power of God and with the power of God. That means he 'is' the power of God. Yet because he is the son of Mary he is also human -- he is both God and man."

Another major flashpoint is the Trinity. Muslims focus on the "three" instead of the "one" in the "three-in-one" definition of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They feel Christians worship multiple gods instead of "the one true God."

But while the New Testament can be a battleground, the Old Testament can be a meeting ground. Many Old Testament Scriptures are included in the Koran. The Koran comments many times about Jesus. "You have to use what the Koran says as a starting point," one Christian said. "You can show them what it says about Isa ben Miriam (Jesus, son of Mary) then ask, 'Why do you not believe this?'"

There's also much to admire in the lifestyle of committed Muslims that Christians can compliment. "If we could pray as much as they do maybe we could be successful," noted Benson Charo, assistant pastor at Msabaha Baptist Church in Kenya. Muslim religious training also is often far ahead of Christians. "If we educated our people like the Muslims do we'd have so many Baptists we'd have to run them off because we wouldn't have room," joked Tanzania missionary Betty Bedenbaugh, now retired.

Next, the differences of the two religions can be examined and explained. If the conversation remains cordial most Muslims will participate. "Islam is a religion of education and deep thought," Coursey pointed out. "Their tradition includes a willingness to pursue ideas and debate differences. They will listen to us if we will listen to them."

Yet many Christians feel it's unnecessary to witness to devout Muslims or are afraid to risk it. "Some people feel if someone is faithful in their religion then we should leave them alone -- but that's nonsense," Mahimbo declared. "I believe Jesus is the only way to heaven and that's why I left Islam."

--more--

"We pray we're at the point of an inverse pyramid," Morgan said. "Once there's a large enough visible Christian community so (Muslims) see they don't have to reject their culture and their tribe if they leave Islam, we'll have real acceleration." Until converts will still face divorce, severed family ties and ruined economic prospects. They'll continue to be seen as rejecting the entire community, not just Islam.

Someday, perhaps that acceleration could become an explosion.

Southern Baptist medical missionaries Sam and Ginny Cannata served four years on the island of Zanzibar before transferring to Ethiopia. Zanzibar is probably the most intense Islamic stronghold in east Africa. They spent those years working on relationships, respecting the culture and loving both verbally and in action.

Yet the frustration of minimal response to the gospel left them feeling defeated many times. "We had to accept that God's timetable is not our timetable and his ways aren't always our ways," explained Cannata, a 34-year veteran of missions in Africa.

"But one morning I found comfort in an unexpected place when I read Isaiah 37 about the Lord killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. God very plainly reminded me, 'I can save 185,000 people just as easily.' We're confident that someday, in a short period of time, 185,000 people on the island of Zanzibar will become Christian."

When that happens, "easier" might really get easier.

--30--

Converted Muslim recants but
calls on Jesus as she dies

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/18/92

ENTEBBE, Uganda (BP)--Her father's promise of salvation from AIDS successfully tempted Mary to recant Christianity.

But her dying breaths were spent calling the name of Jesus -- destroying the father's effort to protect the pure Islamic family name and creating an impact in her community.

Southern Baptist missionary Meg Hesch was Mary's employer, friend, spiritual guide, discipler and nurse. At many critical points, Mary's story also was the missionary's story. The young woman came to work for Hesch and her husband, Roger, in late 1987. Just before Easter 1988, Mary expressed a desire for a relationship with Jesus.

"Once I started reading the Bible and found out who Jesus really is, there was a clear choice," she told Hesch. "Other Muslims had told me what they thought Christianity was but once I knew the truth about Jesus I knew what to do. It wasn't an easy choice but it was a clear choice."

Mary "grew like a weed spiritually," Hesch remembered. "She was so eager to know how she should live she spent every spare moment in her room reading the Bible. She memorized Scripture copiously."

That summer she began to get sick. Every two or three weeks she got a fever for a day or two, accompanied by nausea or weakness. In November she developed skin rashes and weakness and the "bad days" were much more frequent. By the end of December she was bedridden.

Hesch was aware of the horrifying rate of growth in HIV-infected people in Uganda and she was experienced in sharing a Bible-based AIDS counseling tract. But she didn't draw the correct conclusion about Mary's illness easily. She remembers thinking it was ironic she didn't know anyone personally who had AIDS when so many suffered from it.

--more--

But in late 1988 while helping prepare a request for Foreign Mission Board funding of an AIDS clinic, the revelation staggered her. "That's what Mary has!" she screamed internally. "Why her, God? She's only 20 years old! It hurts to see so young a disciple nipped in the bud of her Christianity."

After medical tests confirmed she had AIDS, Mary pounded Hesch with questions about how such a thing could happen to a Christian. Wasn't she a child of God? She didn't try to hide her sexual history. But since she hadn't had sex in four years she insisted the test results were in error.

Meanwhile, her employer-turned-nurse assured her, "Yes, God still loves you. It's just this virus has been in your bloodstream all these years and it's now making you sick."

By now the two women had more than swapped their original roles. Mary vomited constantly and needed help bathing and changing her clothes. "It was a very intimate time," Hesch remembered. "It's unusual for an outsider to live that close to an African." Regularly the missionary would go to Mary's room and "sit on her bed and talk, read the Bible, pray with her, rub her back and give her her medicine -- but mostly just talk."

As her strength failed, Mary's questions increasingly centered on heaven. "Will we dig (have a garden) in heaven? Will we eat matoke (bananas)?" Together the women explored Bible passages and discussed what they meant in the Ugandan culture and language.

Then Mary developed terrible pains in her head and legs, nausea and dizziness. She could no longer read her beloved Bible and ultimately couldn't even remember verses she had memorized so eagerly.

"But she could still talk to Jesus," Hesch said. "She had two recurring visions. In one she saw brilliant flowers shifting and moving. She loved flowers and, before she got sick, kept our house full of fresh bouquets. I'm convinced she was thinking about heaven and, since the most beautiful things she knew were flowers, got a glimpse of a heaven full of that beauty.

"The other vision came as she prayed. A figure -- dressed in brilliant white -- came into her room with extended hands saying, 'Mary, come with me.' I can only conclude that Jesus, in his love for Mary, came to comfort her."

In March the Heschs took Mary home. Mary's father was polite to the missionaries but summoned a witch doctor as soon as they left. When Mary refused treatment because of her Christian convictions the family chased her from the property. Next the missionaries took her to a Catholic hospital near her home.

"That was neutral ground," Hesch explained. "We knew if we had any confrontations with her family it would be there instead of at our home. Plus it was a hospital with godly sisters who could offer her spiritual counsel." But after a few days Mary's brother came, caused a commotion among the staff and forcibly removed Mary to his home.

The following day Mary's father finally visited his dying daughter. He told her a cure for AIDS had just been discovered. He said if Mary would recant her heresy and return to Islam he would take her across Lake Victoria to Mwanza, Tanzania, to buy the cure.

She agreed but the next day she heard the truth. "There's no cure," he admitted. "You will die. But now I can give you a Muslim burial." Earlier he had said if Mary didn't die a Muslim he couldn't be buried with honor himself since he would no longer be head of a purely Islamic clan.

--more--

When the Heschs visited, they were heartened to see Mary's family treating the near-helpless patient with love. But they were devastated when they asked to read the Bible and pray with her. "No," her family said. "She has changed." Mary, "looking like a zombie, lifeless with her eyes glazed and speaking in a monotone said, 'I've come out from within salvation.'"

Hesch, unaware of the father's deception, "grieved more than ever because Satan had gained the upper hand. I think Mary felt like Peter after he denied Jesus three times. The only thing I could think to do was whisper softly as I hugged her, 'Jesus knows his own sheep, Mary. Goodbye.'"

A few days later Mary died. "I was pretty empty for the next several weeks," Hesch admitted. "I thought she had been buried with Muslim rites, that her testimony had been ruined and God had been defeated in that village." But that wasn't the case.

"Her sister came to our home while we were gone and told some church members what had happened," Hesch explained. "The last day Mary started calling out our names and the names of other Christian friends. Over and over she cried, 'Jesus forgive me, Jesus forgive me.'"

Her father got extremely angry but his older sister hushed him, saying, "She's dying. If she knows the way to God she may know better than we do."

Since she obviously couldn't be buried as a Muslim, the family bathed Mary's body, put her in a grave and covered her with dirt. The village was aghast. Mary had not abandoned Christianity after all. She had gone back to Jesus before she went to be with him.

--30--

EDITORS NOTE: There's no period after the "J" in the name of Will J Roberts.

Tanzania church born
in anti-Christian citadel

By Will J Roberts

Baptist Press
5/18/92

MLOLA, Tanzania (BP)--After 60 years "a great wall" of resistance to the gospel in northeastern Tanzania has shattered.

The joyous April 11-12 dedication of Mlola Baptist Church was a striking contrast to earlier Lutheran and Baptist efforts. They endured indifference at best and hostility and witchcraft at other times in the stronghold of folk Islam, which combines Islam with African traditional religion.

Two large groups of Muslims sang traditional songs and danced in the streets to celebrate the historic event as about 500 people packed the church for the 8 p.m.-5 a.m. and 9 a.m.-3 p.m. services. Muslim leaders bedecked in prayer caps and flowing robes were the first to enter the church after it officially opened.

One Muslim leader pointed out Islam also honored Isa ben Mariam (Jesus, son of Mary) and that Muslims and Christians should live together in peace. "Everyone should be free to choose whichever religion he wants," he concluded.

After Lucas Nyoka Wakaruti was ordained as pastor, both Christians and Muslims came forward to give the pastor and his wife gifts.

Elements behind the transformation of Christians from pariahs to welcome friends in the area include: magic spells, a student strike that closed a Baptist seminary, a missionary praying over the valley where Mlola is located, a succession of Tanzanian Christian witnesses and several critically ill residents who recovered after Christians ministered to them.

--more--

Mlola is about 40 miles from Lushoto, capital of the German colony known as Tanganyika before World War I, and the hometown of Daniel Mahimbo. He is pastor of Lushoto Baptist Church and co-director of the evangelism and stewardship department of the Baptist Convention of Tanzania.

German Lutheran missionaries met with considerable success around Lushoto in the early part of this century -- but not in Mlola, which had no use for the outside religion. Decades later, according to Mlola leaders, another Lutheran effort failed when evangelists fled after the local witch doctor put a curse on a plot set aside for a church.

A local government official told the Baptists 99 percent of the residents of Mlola consult a witch doctor at least once a month. No one goes near a local lake or eats fish from it since they believe it's filled with spirits and genies. Each year villagers sacrifice to the lake "and because of this none of the school children have died -- at least not while at school," the official said.

Early in 1990 Southern Baptist missionary Roger Brubeck stopped as he drove through the Usambara Mountains near Mlola. Burdened because no Christian church stood as far as he could see in any direction, he knelt beside his car and claimed the entire area for Christ.

Within weeks two Tanzanian evangelists, with Brubeck's encouragement, began working in the valley. But the handful of converts were all in rural areas; the wall of Mlola was still solid.

But missionaries believe God moved in May 1990 from an unexpected direction. A student strike at the Baptist seminary in Arusha, Tanzania, led to the temporary closure of the school. Instead of going directly home to far western Tanzania, Wakaruti, a seminary student, and his family detoured in the opposite direction and visited Mahimbo in Lushoto.

Mahimbo and Brubeck pled with him to plant a church in Mlola. Wakaruti agreed. Villagers, seeing the entire Christian congregation consisted of Wakaruti's family, taunted him: "Where will you get your members?" they asked. "From those who are peeping in the windows while we worship," Wakaruti replied.

Since he left both Islam and the study of witchcraft to become a Christian, Wakaruti understood the villagers' beliefs and fears. He slowly won acceptance as a "man of God" because of his knowledge of the Koran, the holy book of Islam. Often he and his wife visit the local clinic to pray with patients.

During the church dedication new Christians told how his reputation and those prayers led them to Christ:

-- A new mother, given up for dead, sent for Wakaruti to pray for her. He agreed on condition she cut all the charms from her body and get rid of all of the other tokens of witchcraft. She did, Wakaruti prayed and Brubeck drove her two hours to the nearest hospital. None of the villagers expected her to return alive. But she did.

The woman's mother traveled to the hospital to be with her daughter -- and was fed, housed and cared for by members of Lushoto Baptist Church. The mother and daughter were among the first people to make public commitments to Jesus Christ in Mlola.

-- A widower told how his wife, probably ill from cerebral malaria, didn't get proper care from the clinic's mixture of Western medicine and witchcraft. She fled the clinic and hung herself from a tree. Wakaruti and the small band of Christians later conducted a worship service under the tree to prove their God was stronger than witchcraft.

Afterwards they cut the tree down and used it for firewood even though no one else in the village would touch it for fear of being cursed. Such boldness, the man said, convinced him to become a Christian too.

--more--

Wakaruti, Mahimbo, Brubeck and the small band of Mlola believers know it will take continued boldness for the Christian witness to grow in the midst of a community still strongly bound to Islam and superstitious fear. But they feel God has broken down the wall for a reason -- so they can walk through it.

--30--

Roberts is a veteran Southern Baptist missionary in Tanzania.

It's not always a peaceful
road to Christian peace

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/18/92

MOMBASA, Kenya (BP)--Amina Abdul once sold drugs, potent home-brewed liquor and herself.

It wasn't until months after she stopped all the illegal activities a mob showed up in the middle of night with torches in their hands and threats on their lips.

They weren't upset that she was no longer the local dealer, bootlegger and prostitute. They were angry she had become a Christian.

Today she wears a new scarf, pulled to the side to cover the ear mutilated because she left Islam, and a new Christian name, Sarah Abdul. She also has a new, fireproof roof on her house and only a few charred door frames haven't been replaced. She sells coconuts and vegetables to feed herself and her daughter and she smiles as she tells people about how Jesus healed her physically and spiritually.

Abdul's father is Ethiopian. Her mother, one of three wives, is Somali. Despite the family's strong Muslim identity, the high moral teachings of Islam didn't influence Sarah's lifestyle. Two of her three children (all by different fathers) live in Tanzania with yet another former live-in boyfriend because he couldn't stand the way she neglected them.

Profits from drug deals, brewing chang'aa (a gin-like alcohol) and prostitution provided Abdul a large house, nice clothes and a good time. But late in 1987 her leg began swelling. For six months she visited doctors, swallowed pills and rubbed on lotions. Nothing helped. On May 8, 1988, the medical verdict came down: amputation. She ran out of the hospital screaming. She struggled up the hill toward another village -- and passed a church.

She had always ignored the mud-and-grass structure before but the sight of a white man in an area where tourists never go caught her attention. When she stopped to see what was going on, she heard people saying, "Come to Jesus, those who have burdens of sickness or difficult troubles come to Jesus. In Jesus there is life."

As a Muslim she knew the dangers of associating with Christians. But the throbbing in her leg seemed to urge her inside to share her grief. The white man, Robert Smith, a layman from First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, was in Mombasa with an evangelistic crusade.

Smith counseled her, then asked her to kneel in prayer for physical and spiritual healing. Even in her desperation, the promise jarred against her upbringing. "How can I do that?" she asked. "I'm a Muslim."

"Sickness is finished in you," Smith replied, "if you put your faith in Jesus." So Amina Abdul, trembling and sweating, knelt in the dust of a mud-walled Baptist church overlooking the Indian Ocean and prayed to God in the name of that man, Jesus.

Church members escorted her home to the Muslim village. Later a man returned with a gift of two pairs of new socks -- evidence he too believed Jesus was powerful enough to heal her swollen leg. Day by day the swelling went down until it was normal.

--more--

The villagers weren't pleased with her Christian conversion but they noted the changes in her life. She told the man she had been living with to move out, doused the fires under the chang'aa pots, threw her drug supply away and quit walking the streets. For six months Abdul worshipped at the church in the village up the hill, studied her Bible and was disciplined by older Christians.

Finally, on Nov. 13, 1988, she and the church felt it was time to publicly declare her desire for a new life as a Christian. She was baptized in the Indian Ocean and took her Christian name in place of Amina.

The baptism incited the village far beyond her earlier actions. It marked her as an infidel. "That afternoon the man I had been living with came and starting beating me," she said. "We fought almost two hours before he bit the bottom half of my right ear off -- then he left." A mutilated ear is a way of "marking" a woman who is to be shunned, she explained.

She returned to the hospital, where a doctor once was ready to amputate her leg, to have the ear treated. "(The mutilation) is because of Jesus so you better return to Islam. If not you'll die," neighbors warned her. Two weeks later, at 4 a.m., the former live-in boyfriend quietly led a crowd to Abdul's house and poured kerosene on the thatched roof. Inside, troubled by a vivid dream about a snake, Sarah woke up and "smelled the smoke in time to grab my daughter and run outside."

Pinned between the flaring banana leaves and the crowd, Sarah fell to her knees crying "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." The villagers mocked her, yelling that Jesus could not dim the flames, that he couldn't pour water on the roof. And to their delight, he didn't.

The concrete floor and the stone-and-mud walls survived but the support beams and all her belongings were destroyed. "People said surely I would run but I knew I had to stay, so I told them Jesus would still protect me," she said.

But faith and fear are not mutually exclusive. Village rumors predicted a mob would return to kill her. A tin replacement roof on the house took all of her money, "so I couldn't afford a fence to keep people away."

Her pastor reminded her, "Jesus defeats evil even better than a fence. A person can kill you through a fence if he has a gun but if you give everything to Jesus they can never kill you." So she prayed and believed. "I said, 'Jesus, you be my fence. You be my peace and my everything.'"

That was four years ago. No one ever came again to threaten her. She still has to walk to the next village to worship, but now another Christian lives close by. Her half-sister came to her two years ago and said she wanted to ask Jesus to be her Savior.

"All my brothers and other Muslims treat me like I'm dead since I became a Christian," she admits. "But I'm not going back to Islam. Even if my mother and father reject me when I tell them what has happened to me, I still will not turn back from Jesus.

"Everyone here said I would die or go insane unless I became a Muslim again, but they all can see how happy I am. And they see what happened to the man who bit me and burned my house. They call him 'Zolo' now -- that means 'crazy'. I saw him the other day and walked right up to him. He looked at me and asked 'Who are you?'

"I'm just a woman and I have no power. But I have peace. I have Jesus."

S.C. Baptist Convention
severs ties with Furman

By Marta Carlisano & Ben L. McDade

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Messengers to a special South Carolina Baptist Convention voted May 15 to dissolve legal and financial ties with the convention's oldest institution, Furman University.

The vote came after 19 months of controversy and debate. Furman University trustees first voted to amend their charter and give their board sole authority to elect trustees in October 1990.

The second largest number of messengers in the convention's history, 4,873, met in the Cantey and Ellis buildings at the state fairgrounds in Columbia. Hal Lane, pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Greenwood who opposed Furman's release, said the vote "will set a precedent for the loss of other Baptist institutions. God has not called us to retreat in the face of intimidation and controversy."

Robert Shrum, president of the general board and pastor of Oakland Baptist Church in Rock Hill, called on messengers to end the controversy. "It is time for a different and new relationship to be formed between Furman and South Carolina Baptist Convention. It is time for Furman to chart its own course."

Prior to the Furman vote, messengers voted to rescind the November 1991 recommendation to seek legal action against the college. The motion to rescind was approved overwhelmingly. Shrum asked messengers to approve the motion because of a drop in the Baptist funding system, the Cooperative Program. "Let us elect to protect the lifeline of our other ministries and let this go," Shrum said.

A motion to place \$1.56 million representing escrowed 1991 Cooperative Program funds into an irrevocable trust account for Furman University scholarships, was replaced by a substitute motion presented by Stephen D.C. Corts, pastor of Citadel Square Baptist Church in Charleston. Corts' substitute motion placed 1991 funds in an irrevocable trust fund reserved for students going into church-related vocations at South Carolina Baptist Convention institutions and all six Southern Baptist seminaries, excluding Furman University. A show of hands was inconclusive and a ballot vote was taken. The vote outcome was 2,179 in favor, 2,088 against.

In other votes, messengers approved \$30,000 to fund a full-time campus minister at Furman University beginning in the fall of 1992 to continue to develop the Baptist Student Union program on the campus.

Messengers also approved a motion to allocate \$25,000 to the South Carolina Baptist Historical Collection housed at Furman for use in recording and preserving the history of South Carolina Baptist churches.

The balance of funds, about \$450,000, was allocated for scholarships for South Carolina Baptist students attending the three remaining state Baptist colleges: Anderson College, North Greenville College and Charleston Southern University for the 1992-93 school year. The funds would be allocated by the general board's campus ministry scholarship committee.

Remaining 1992 funds budgeted for Furman after the special session of the convention are to be divided equally among Anderson College, North Greenville College and Charleston Southern University, the three remaining convention institutions of higher education. If the 1992 budget is fully funded, funds would amount to \$1.1 million. An amendment to include Furman in this allocation of funds was introduced but failed.

--more--

Prior to the end of the called session at 5 p.m., convention president Eddie Greene, pastor of New Prospect Baptist Church in Anderson, introduced his appointments to a committee to study the agencies and institutions of the South Carolina Baptist Convention: James W. Herron, member of Overbrook Baptist Church in Greenville, chairman; Ronald G. Dillon, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, Hanahan; Woodrow W. Harris, retired pastor of Langston Memorial Baptist Church, Conway; Lillie E. Herndon, member of First Baptist Church, Columbia; J. Woodrow Lewis, member of Swift Creek Baptist Church, Hartsville; John R. Lincoln; pastor of Shandon Baptist Church, Columbia; Fran Michael, member of Ashley River Baptist Church, Charleston; Harper Norman, member of First Baptist Church, Abbeville; Gene Ott, member of Portside Baptist Church, North Charleston; David W. Patterson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church, Camden; Irene Raffini, member of Concord Baptist Church, Anderson; and W.J. Rivers, pastor of Millbrook Baptist Church, Aiken.

--30--

Quilt to be bought, given to Parks
by WMU annual meeting attendees By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press
5/18/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Participants in the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting June 7-8 will have an opportunity to give a special missions gift to R. Keith Parks, retiring president of the Foreign Mission Board, and his wife, Helen Jean.

The gift is twofold. It includes a contribution to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and a handmade quilt by Brazilian women and Southern Baptist women missionaries in south Brazil.

The quilt arrived at the WMU national office in Birmingham, Ala., in March. Enclosed with the quilt was a letter from Carolyn Smith, missionary to Londrina, Parana, Brazil. She explained that in the summer of 1991, missionaries working in South Brazil joined her in a desire "to do something concrete for missions."

More than 30 women took pieces of fabric home to hand-piece the squares of the quilt. When they gathered again in the fall they brought their handwork. During their time together they pieced the quilt top.

Smith then took the quilt top to a group of Brazilian women in Sertanopolis where a quilting and crafts cottage industry has been established. A group of Baptist women from Tyler, Texas, had taught the Brazilian women how to quilt during a mission trip there in the late 1980s.

The quilt was displayed at the annual meeting of the Brazilian Baptist Convention this past January.

Smith asked the national leaders of WMU to use the quilt to bring money to the Lottie Moon offering.

"It is our prayer our effort will inspire other women to contribute with something extra which costs their time and efforts," Smith said.

The national WMU leaders decided to ask men and women attending the WMU annual meeting to contribute money to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to "purchase" the quilt for Parks and his wife.

The leaders had wanted to present them with something to thank them for their years of work and commitment to world missions. They felt the quilt would symbolize the joint efforts of Southern Baptist missionaries and the people with whom they work. At the same time, the contributions to the Lottie Moon offering would further the work Parks has led.

The quilt will be on display throughout the WMU annual meeting. A trunk which belonged to Lottie Moon will be displayed with the quilt. Anyone wishing to contribute to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to help purchase the quilt for the Parks may place money in the trunk before or after any session of the meeting until 7 p.m. Monday, June 8.

--more--

Moon was the Southern Baptist missionary to China who challenged missions-minded women in the United States to give sacrificially in 1888 so two female missionaries could be sent to help her. The offering later was named for Moon.

The quilt will be given to Parks and his wife during the Monday evening session which begins at 7 p.m. in the Indiana Convention Center/Hoosier Dome. The total amount given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering will be announced.

--30--

Oklahoma board recommends shift
in CP percent, designated funds

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
5/18/92

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Citing nine straight years of flat growth in Cooperative Program receipts from Oklahoma churches, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's board of directors recommended lowering from 44.25 to 42 percent the percentage of receipts sent on to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Directors also voted to change the method of changing the CP division in the future and to no longer handle funds designated to agencies not supported by the BGCO or SBC.

The recommended percentage change came after months of study by the board's Cooperative Program study committee, which compared records from 1925 to the present, looking at facts and trends.

In the end, the committee determined that without a change, missions work in Oklahoma would be seriously damaged. Bill Merrell, director of missions for Comanche-Cotton Association, based in Lawton, and committee chairman, said it was a hard decision to make.

"Those recommendations are based on facts, not emotions," Merrell said. "We believe this absolutely must be done at this time and in this setting for our convention to operate on a stable basis for the near term. The intent is to operate lean, but not to cut away the muscle from the great work of missions in Oklahoma."

William G. Tanner, BGCO executive director-treasurer, said the convention's problems were caused by the oil boom/bust that wreaked havoc on the state's economy. During the boom years, he said CP giving increased 13.8 percent a year. Since then, in 1983-91, CP giving has risen only 1.94 percent a year while fixed operating costs have greatly increased.

Tanner said the adjustment is necessary to avoid any more cuts in BGCO programs or personnel. No raises are planned.

Three actions were taken by the board in relation to the budget. The first rescinds a 1987 action that required the BGCO to increase its CP from .25 to 1 percent any time giving was up in Oklahoma. The second gives the budget subcommittee the authority to adjust CP percentage as needed; the adjustment would still have to be approved by BGCO messengers at the annual meeting. Finally, the percentage was lowered to 42 percent.

All three recommendations must be approved by BGCO messengers in November.

In another related action, directors changed the handling of designated funds to offset bookkeeping problems caused by churches designating funds to many different nonprofit agencies.

In the past, a church could send its money as "Cooperative Program" money, which is divided by the BGCO between state and SBC causes, or it could designate gifts to a number of different areas or to "Other." Churches used "other" for a multitude of organizations, such as Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Luther Rice Seminary and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

--more--

With some churches designating funds to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which has three different giving plans, bookkeeping became even more difficult.

Tanner said he felt the recommendation was a fair solution to a tough problem. "We think this is a reasonable position to take," he said. "We will handle only designations specifically designated for our state convention and its work or for the Southern Baptist Convention and its work. Our auditors feel we have serious complications developing that could require additional personnel to handle the growing number of designation options."

Board member Jarene Robison, member of First Baptist Church in Tulsa, said she was afraid the action might cause a backlash from persons sympathetic with the CBF. She said her church had dealt with the problem by agreeing to send funds on to the CBF.

"It does take more work but it was better for the fellowship," Robison said.

Administrative committee chairman Alan Day, pastor of First Baptist Church in Edmond, said the committee was sympathetic to those feelings. "We would never tell an autonomous church how it could or should do its business," Day said. "But this body is an autonomous body and must make some good business decisions and some wise decisions."

The change will be implemented by the BCGO over the next few months.

--30--

'Call to Joy' conference
for Ministers' Wives cancelled

Baptist Press
5/18/92

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The "Call to Joy" conference for ministers' wives scheduled Aug. 13-15, 1992, in Birmingham has been cancelled.

The conference was to be sponsored by Magazette, the magazine for ministers' wives published by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Registration response for the conference was not as high as was necessary to make hotel and meeting facility commitments, said WMU staff involved in the decision. They cited the slow economy as the cause of the low response.

"We feel the economy is limiting the choices ministers' wives have," said Carol Causey, conference coordinator. "In times of budget crunches for many churches and people, the money just isn't available for conferences such as this."

WMU staff will look for new ways to offer support to ministers' wives, Causey said, while continuing to help support a luncheon during the Southern Baptist Convention each year, publish Magazette and offer a special track of conferences for ministers' wives at both Ridgecrest and Glorieta Baptist Conference Centers each summer during WMU weeks.

--30--

Illinois pastor bikes to Atlanta
to deliver Home Missions offering By Brenda Sanders

Baptist Press
5/18/92

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Illinois pastor Tom Egglely is a cycling enthusiast who enjoys combining his love of sports with creative missions and outreach efforts.

He brought those interests together recently when he challenged his congregation to raise \$1,800 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions. If church members met their goal, Egglely said he personally would take the offering to the Home Mission Board in Atlanta -- riding his bike all the way.

Members of Towerview Baptist Church in Belleville, Ill., enthusiastically accepted their pastor's challenge and surpassed their goal, raising \$2,092.

--more--

Following Sunday morning worship April 26, deacons of the church formed a circle around the pastor and prayed for his safety. After a quick lunch, several members of the congregation walked to the church parking lot and waved as Egglely rode off on his red 12-speed bike, beginning the six-day, 600-mile trip to Atlanta.

Three members of the church's Christian Cycling Club, including Egglely's daughter, Pam, rode along with him the first day. When he stopped for the night at Chester, Ill., club members bid him good-bye and returned to Belleville.

Throughout the journey, his parents, Lee and Mildred Egglely, accompanied him in a van, providing support and "keeping an eye on him."

Egglely stayed away from major highways as much as possible, riding about 100 miles per day, drinking "lots of GatorAid" and eating pretzels for carbohydrates and bananas for potassium.

During the first two nights of the trip, Egglely spoke at First Baptist Church in Chester and First Southern Baptist Church in Cairo, Ill., respectively. Dressed in costume as the Apostle Paul, he delivered a monologue encouraging support of missions.

On the third night, he attended a revival service at Highland Park Baptist Church in Jackson, Tenn., and on the fourth night, he stopped in Florence, Ala., to visit with James Warren, director of missions for Colbert Lauderdale Baptist Association.

Along the way, several church members opened their homes to Egglely and his parents, providing them with places to stay overnight.

On the evening of May 1, Egglely rode into Atlanta and delivered his church's Annie Armstrong Offering to Bob Banks, HMB executive vice president.

"I was relieved and happy to get the mission accomplished," Egglely said. "I know it may seem like a crazy thing but I like to do crazy things! I felt it was a good way to promote interest in the missions offering."

Towerview Baptist Church secretary Connie Henschel said Egglely encourages the congregation to be "missions-minded."

"He likes to promote physical, as well as spiritual, improvement and growth," Henschel said. "He tells us to take care of ourselves so we will be better able to be personally involved in missions and ministry."

The past several years Egglely has cycled to the Illinois Baptist State Association's Springfield, Ill., headquarters to deliver the church's annual state missions offering.

He organized the Belleville congregation's Christian Cycling Club more than a year ago for fellowship and outreach, encouraging club members to invite unchurched friends to join them on the club's monthly rides.

His father, a former radio sports announcer, said he is proud of Egglely's accomplishments. He noted his son began cycling 12 years ago and has logged 32,000 miles on his bike -- more than the circumference of the earth.

A fondness for sports is not the only interest the Eggleys share.

Both father and son are involved in church leadership and are graduates of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. The younger Egglely graduated from Midwestern in 1972 and his father, volunteer music director at Smith Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in McLeansboro, Ill., graduated in 1978.

--more--

Referring to Eggle's ride to Atlanta, his father said, "He doesn't do these kinds of things for show. He does it because he loves missions and wants his congregation to be missions supporters."

--30--

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

2 Stetson dorms to pilot
extended visitation hours

Baptist Press
5/18/92

DeLAND, Fla. (BP)--Two of eight residence halls at Stetson University will have extended visitation hours in a pilot program to be initiated next fall.

Visitation hours at the two residence halls will be from 10 a.m. Friday to 12:30 a.m. Monday. The dorms' occupants are largely junior and senior students, according to Stetson officials.

The changes survived discussions by the university trustees' student affairs committee and the full board of trustees. At least three Florida pastors voiced concern for extending visitation hours in even a limited number of campus facilities.

The changes are being adopted "to provide more mature students with more freedom," said Stetson President Douglas Lee. But, he said, it is not "'24-hour visitation' with all that that implies -- no rules or regulations, sexual misconduct and open access to residence halls. Such a concept of 24-hour visitation is not consistent with Stetson's standards for student conduct and safety. Stetson's moral code and standards for student conduct have not changed."

Lee noted many of Stetson's sister Baptist institutions offer older students attractive "on-campus" alternatives to traditional residence halls. Stetson is not financially able at present to construct new types of residence halls, such as apartment buildings, or to make major renovations in existing buildings."

In the pilot program, university regulations governing access to the dorms remain in force, said James Beasley, vice president and dean of campus life. All doors have 24-hour locks which can be opened only by a hall resident; visitors of the opposite sex must be accompanied by a hall escort; and overnight stays are permitted only for visitors of the same sex as the room occupant. The university is implementing a hall monitoring program for all residence halls as an added security measure, Beasley said.

The university will provide some spaces with a "no visitation" policy for students who wish more restrictive regulations, he said.

--30--

Information for this story first appeared in the Florida Baptist Witness, May 14.

Chaplains to discuss their
role in Southern Baptist life

Baptist Press
5/18/92

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist chaplains and pastoral counselors will focus on their place in the denomination during a June 8 convocation near Indianapolis.

The panel discussion is part of the annual chaplains and pastoral counselors meeting at Fort Benjamin Harrison on Monday preceding the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis.

Huey Perry, director of the Home Mission Board chaplaincy division, will address the topic during the morning session. The afternoon program includes a panel discussion with three chaplains and a response by Reginald McDonough, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

--more--

The program will begin with registration at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m. Pre-registration is not required but lunch reservations are requested. To make reservations, contact the HMB chaplaincy division at (404) 898-7440.

--30--

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Although urged to withdraw, Pressler says he has support" dated 5/15/92, please change Paul Pressler's age to 61. He will not be 62 until June.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Louisiana evangelist candidate for SBC VP" 5/15/92, dated 5/15/92, please replace the fourth paragraph with the following:

Aulds, a native of Louisiana and state pastor for more than 16 years, could be a candidate for second vice president depending on the situation, according to Leo Lytle, pastor of Bentley (La.) Baptist Church, Aulds' spokesman. At this date, Lytle said, it has not been decided who will nominate the evangelist at the SBC meeting.

--30--

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Baptist Press is available on

CompuServe

For more information contact David Haywood
at CompuServe ID 70007,5000 or phone 615-251-2895