

(BP)

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee
-- 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 Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

May 31, 1994

94-92

VIRGINIA -- Street kids: 'castaways' of the world's cities; photos.
KENYA -- Nairobi street kids find a home at Baptist center; photos.
KENYA -- Orphans or not, street kids share same dangers and needs; photos.
VIRGINIA -- Potential street kid now 'missionary kid' in Brazil; photo.
ROMANIA -- Romanian religious liberty addressed by SBC guests.
WASHINGTON -- Clinton signs clinic-access bill; it's a 'farce,' CLC lawyer says.
NASHVILLE -- Coppenger targets Baptist media as biased in coverage of issues
OREGON -- Press association president responds to Coppenger article.
TEXAS -- Accrediting agencies review Southwestern, Dilday firing.
FLORIDA -- Florida church to open books, pay court costs in lawsuit.

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee**

Street kids: 'castaways'
of the world's cities

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
5/31/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--"All I wanted was to be a child, but they wouldn't let me."

So reads the headstone at the grave of Nahaman Carmona, a 13-year-old street kid reportedly kicked to death in 1990 by Guatemalan police in plain view of eyewitnesses.

About 100 other street children followed her body to the cemetery. The words on Nahaman's headstone could be their motto too -- or that of most street children.

Pure religion, said the apostle James, is to visit orphans and widows in their distress. In that context, Christians have a lot of visiting to do: UNICEF estimates up to 145 million children languish on the streets of the world's cities.

Not all street children are orphans, but most face the life of the abandoned -- hunger, hopelessness, the constant threat of abuse or death. Millions engage in long hours of manual labor to eke out existence. Others beg, search garbage for food, steal, join violent gangs or sell their bodies in order to eat.

"Street children are ... totally exploited," writes John Cheyne, recently retired director of human needs ministries for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "Poverty is the pimp that leads to child prostitution, theft, drug abuse and, ultimately, death."

As many as 10 million children worldwide may be trapped in the sex industry through prostitution, pornography and "sex tourism," Cheyne estimates. Besides the abuse and degradation they suffer, they're especially vulnerable to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases -- which they also pass on. "They are utterly without hope and willing to sell themselves to the highest bidder," said a Brazilian pastor. "They are constantly depressed and melancholic, considering themselves to be worthless."

Cheyne's report reveals a grim situation in cities around the world.

--more--

For example, street kids are called *trombados* -- "castaways" -- in Brazil, where estimates of their ranks range as high as 17 million, Cheyne wrote. Many Brazilians call for rescuing and protecting the homeless children; others blame them for rampant crime and other urban social problems. Meanwhile, the children themselves frequently die at the hands of vigilantes or killers apparently hired to eliminate them.

Where do street children come from? Cheyne identifies three basic types:

-- Children ON the street -- The largest group, they may live with one or both parents or another relative. But they spend their days on the street doing whatever it takes to bring something back to their poverty-stricken families -- shining shoes, selling trinkets, stealing.

-- Children OF the street -- A parent or relative may be alive, but these children have little contact with them because of abuse, alcoholism or other problems. Some are runaways; others have been forced out of their homes by parents in extreme poverty.

-- Children IN the street -- The smallest percentage of the total, they have been abandoned, orphaned or completely separated from their families for other reasons. They have no one.

The suffering of all three groups can be traced back in most cases to poverty. The families of many street kids migrated from poor rural areas to cities hoping for a better life -- and found one even worse.

The Foreign Mission Board has channeled \$726,000 into ministries to street children in Brazil, Argentina, Kenya and other countries since the beginning of 1993. About \$375,000 of that money has gone to Brazil alone. About \$125,000 is being used at a Baptist center in Recife. The center provides food and infant care for about 500 families and helps educate about 1,000 children.

Another \$100,000 financed the purchase of property and a building to be used as a home and training center for street children in Itajuba. An additional \$80,000 funds a program that provides a home, food, medicine and vocational training for street children in Rio de Janeiro. In that city alone, an estimated 35,000 children live on the streets.

Most street children grow up -- if they grow up -- in "totally non-Christian settings," says Cheyne. "Mostly they know nothing of Christ as Savior and Lord, and if they consider the church at all, it is in terms of its failure to care.

"Isn't it past time we considered these children as a target both for evangelism and just plain caring?"

--30--

Mary E. Speidel contributed to this story.

EDITORS' NOTE: In addition to five photos accompanying the three stories below, a photo story with copy block and six photos titled "A Lost Generation" -- documenting the life of street kids in Nairobi, Kenya -- was mailed May 27 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Nairobi street kids find
a home at Baptist center

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
5/31/94

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--At age 7, John Kimani already qualifies for a five-year pin as a "street kid."

He was 2 years old when his mother locked him and an older brother and sister out of the house. He had two choices -- die or learn to scrounge for food in garbage bins and beg for handouts from people who happened by.

He didn't die.

He even became something of a legend in the Nairobi subculture, where he's now known as "Survivor," not "John."

"My mother likes to drink beer and she doesn't want to spend money on food for us," he explained. "But I've made it this far."

--more--

His smile is as quick as his wits, and he finally has reason to smile these days. He's one of 75 children sheltered at the Dagoretti Corner Childcar Baptist Rehabilitation Center for Street Children, a project funded and operated by Kenyan Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries.

Now, instead of spending all his time and energy simply getting enough to eat and avoiding beatings, he can learn to read. He can sleep safely in a warm bed and eat three healthy meals a day. He can listen to Bible stories and memorize gospel choruses and Scriptures.

Except for his age, Survivor's story is common.

Thousands of children roam the streets of Kenya's capital. They sleep in culverts and abandoned cars and on sidewalks. They collect scrap paper and panhandle from tourists. And they sniff glue and gasoline. That can ruin their brains, but it numbs their minds to the reality of their existence. If necessary for survival, they steal or sell themselves as prostitutes.

Solutions vary. Several Nairobi agencies have programs to keep street children occupied and fed. A major advertising campaign urges Kenyans not to fear them and to give them vouchers for food and shelter instead of money, which they usually use to buy drugs. But they often tear up vouchers in front of the donors. And the number of ragged children never seems to decrease -- except when police sweep through to make streets less offensive to tourists.

But in the Dagoretti area of Nairobi the success rate runs higher, thanks to the Baptist center.

"I started out trying to work in downtown Nairobi but couldn't seem to do much good," said Enos Oumo, director of the center. "I even met Survivor down there, but at the time the center wasn't ready and about all I could do was talk to him and the other kids.

"After we fed them and left, they just went back to the streets. So we decided to concentrate on kids from this area and try to get them off the streets. As far as we know now, only three kids from this area of town are still on the streets. The rest are either here or we've rehabilitated them and got them back with their parents. The children you now see in Dagoretti have come in from other parts of Nairobi."

The drive and dreams of Oumo and Southern Baptist missionary Barry Kitchens -- with help from scores of Kenyan Baptists -- brought the center to reality. Faith keeps it going.

Oumo became a Christian in 1982 while in prison. Immediately, he recalled, "God gave me a burden for prisoners." That led to a vision of establishing a home for children of prisoners, which led to an interest in child evangelism -- which led to an interest in street kids.

When he came to Nairobi in 1986, Oumo started a child evangelism project at First Baptist Church of Dagoretti Corner. But soon he was drawn to the specific needs of homeless youths. In early 1993 he got a government permit for "preaching and rehabilitation" from the Kenyan president's office. After a few weeks downtown he moved his base back to First Baptist.

A Saturday feeding program promptly attracted 47 street children. After two months 200-300 kids were showing up. That's when Kitchens, of Crowder, Okla., discovered the program and asked if he could help.

Many children came from the slums around the church. But 64 were hard-core street urchins who went back to garbage bins and glue sniffing after the Saturday meal.

So Oumo started a "walk program." Soon 35 street kids joined him three days a week for all-day outings -- walking three or four miles in the morning and stopping to hear Bible stories or sing. In the afternoon they would walk back to Dagoretti. At 7 p.m. they got a meal of boiled meat.

Fridays were wash days: Oumo, Kitchens and friends boiled water for baths and bought petroleum jelly to rub on the children's dried, scabby skin. "The idea was to make them forget life in the city--begging and stealing--and get them used to being with us, with the ultimate goal of getting them into the center," Oumo said.

--more--

Meanwhile, Kitchens rounded up support from local businesses. A Hindu butcher heard about the program and asked if he could donate 10-12 pounds of meat weekly. A Muslim pharmacist donated drugs, along with a mournful rebuke to the American missionary.

"You're doing the cruelest things in the world," he told Kitchens. "By feeding them only on Saturdays you're teaching them what hunger is really like the other six days of the week."

With that challenge before him, Kitchens submitted a project proposal to use Southern Baptist hunger relief funds. Oumo, who already had recruited numerous volunteers to help, began contacting local hotels and businesses for assistance. Merchants donated beds, blankets, pots and pans.

A suitable building was top priority. In July 1993 Oumo and others underwent an eight-day fast, praying God would "open the door for us to get a center and financing." They felt led to a building that housed a bar and house of prostitution and prayed to take possession. Oumo had no idea where the money would come from, but he began negotiating the rent.

Within days Kitchens learned the Southern Baptist mission organization in Kenya had decided to fund the center with about \$1,000 a month for food. Unknown to Kitchens, that was the exact amount Oumo had estimated they needed.

The center opened in August 1993 with 64 resident kids. Soon a day school was added for local children too poor to afford school fees. Ten teachers now work with 300 children in six grades.

Oumo and "the disciples" (his volunteers) tracked down the parents of most of the children, visited them and shared the gospel with them. The children were organized into choirs and started a regular program of Bible study. Bible studies for parents (mostly single mothers) drew big crowds too.

In November, 65 children and mothers were baptized. In January another 44 were baptized, in March an additional 45. Githembe Baptist Church, which meets at the center, attracts overflow crowds each Sunday with more than 100 adults in attendance.

Children and staff at the center don't say "hello." Rather, the standard greeting is "Praise the Lord."

"We've been told we can't take any more children in because we don't have enough room and there's no budget to keep the day school going," Oumo pointed out. "But which child do we leave on the street, and how many children from the slums will go to the street if we don't offer them education?"

Tough questions. And while the Baptist program certainly won't solve the street kid problem for the entire city of Nairobi, it's making a difference. "You can see it in photographs we took," Kitchens said before transferring to another assignment in Tanzania. Missionary Charles Orange of Colorado Springs, Colo., now works with the center in addition to other duties.

"In the early pictures the kids are solemn, but now you see smiles everywhere," Kitchens said. "We were told we'd lose kids when we disciplined them, but we've only had one leave because of that. If you love them they'll accept discipline. They just want a chance."

A chance to be more than a survivor.

--30--

(BP) photos (two horizontal and two vertical) mailed May 27 (one mailed in a separate envelope) to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press for story above and another story titled "Orphans or not, street kids share same dangers and needs." Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

**Orphans or not, street kids
share same dangers and needs**

By Craig Bird

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--All street kids can be divided into three categories. "First, you have true orphans who don't have anywhere to live, but they're a small minority," says Enos Oumo, director of The Dagoretti Corner Childcare Baptist Rehabilitation Center for Street Children in Nairobi, Kenya.

"Then, you have children who are on the streets because their mothers are prostitutes who chase them from home in the daytime so they can sleep and who leave them alone at night while they look for money.

"Finally, you have children whose families are so poor they send them to the streets to look for food for themselves and their relatives."

But the reason children are on the streets doesn't change the dangers and needs they all share.

A recent survey of the center's young residents revealed five actual orphans among 25 girls and 35 boys found on the streets. Residents included one 5-year old and two 6-year-olds. The oldest was 19. The ethnic breakdown included the five largest tribes in Kenya. One child has AIDS.

-- Mesack Ochieng, 16, completed eighth grade before his mother died and school money ran out. His father berated him for "consuming food but not bringing anything in." He joined street boys in the western Kenyan town of Kisumu for four months before coming to Nairobi. He took drugs, "because if you smoke you wake up and the night has gone without you feeling pain."

Then he met Oumo. Of 40 boys in his gang, 15 now live at the center, a project funded and operated by Kenyan Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries.

"I didn't think I'd stay because I'd lived with no one to control me or guide me in what's right," he admitted. "But by God's grace I do respect the control here. Brother Enos is God's man and servant. I see Jesus in him."

-- Helen Obiero, 14, left home after her father died in ethnic fighting in 1985. Her mother was sick and sent her to work in Nairobi. She found a job as a maid with a wealthy family working 5 a.m.-10 p.m. seven days a week. She was paid less than \$3 a month and "a little bit of food." But her employers beat her, so she joined her brother on the street, eating out of garbage cans and sleeping under cars. She made more money begging than as a maid.

"I came to the center and was given food and a place to sleep," she said. "They preached the gospel of salvation to me and I accepted it because of the love in this place."

-- John Macharia, 19, has learning disabilities. "Even if we had money to send all our children to school he wouldn't be able to make it," Oumo said. But when the center received a donation of baby chicks during the winter, Macharia moved into the poultry room with them, curling his body around them to keep them warm until they were big enough to survive. "The idea," Oumo said, "is to keep breeding until we can give young men like John their own hens so they can set up a business back in their home villages. John could not only support himself but even make enough money selling eggs to help take care of his grandmother."

-- Veronica Njeri, 14, left home when she was 8 "because of hunger" after her father abandoned the family of seven. She begged and took drugs, sometimes sharing one loaf of bread with six other children for a day's food. Many days she didn't eat at all. Three of her siblings also live at the center.

-- Issac Njoroge, 18, was a high-volume drug dealer in the district south of Nairobi. He sold more than \$100 of drugs a day, but his commission was less than \$6 a month. He moved back home but couldn't get along with his parents. He hit the streets again, this time collecting and selling waste paper, until he met Oumo.

Now he lives under stricter rules than his parents imposed. How? "Bible studies and counseling help," he said. "The first time I met Enos he preached about leaving the old person and becoming a new one. The center is helping me do that."

Similar stories abound -- girls who were prostitutes before coming to the center, boys who worked in gangs committing more and more daring robberies. Many knew more about making "changa" (a gin-like, illegal home brew) than math before coming to the center.

The center's accommodations seem harsh to an American. Dorm rooms are jammed with bunk beds. The girls often have to haul water from almost a mile away because of chronic water shortages.

But the gap between where they've been and where they are is better measured by the abundant smiles, by the small children playing in the safety of the courtyard, by the confidence in the older youths as they stand before churches and politicians and give their testimonies.

And the children's choirs burst with enthusiasm and talent.

One of their favorite songs seems to have been written especially for street kids:

"Don't worry about food or what you have to wear," they sing loudly, "Because your Heavenly Father cares for you."

--30--

(BP) photos (two horizontal and two vertical) mailed May 27, 1994 (one mailed in a separate envelope) to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press for story above and another story titled "Nairobi street kids find a home at Baptist center." Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Potential street kid now
'missionary kid' in Brazil

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
5/31/94

ROCKVILLE, Va. (BP)--An estimated 32,000 children sleep on the streets every night in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

James Carlos Sprouse, almost 3, could have been one of them.

"In the situation he was in, Carl had about a 5 percent likelihood of not ending up as a street kid," said the toddler's adoptive father, Bennie Sprouse, a Southern Baptist missionary in Rio de Janeiro.

Carl, or Carlos as Brazilians call him, was born to a Brazilian maid.

For the first six weeks of his life he slept in a hammock. His unwed mother, 20, knew she couldn't support the baby. Her parents were dead and her only brother couldn't afford to help rear the child. Neither could her employers, an evangelical family she lived with in Macapa, a north Brazil seaport on the equator.

When Carl was about a month old, his mother asked a visiting evangelical missionary to spend a week helping her find a home for the child. "My baby is not sin, but he came out of sin in my life," the young woman told the missionary. "I have nothing to give him but a Christian family."

Less than a week later, the phone rang at another missionary home 1,600 miles away in Campinas, Brazil. Bennie and Ann Sprouse, from Forest City, N.C., and their only child, Emily, then 9, were eating lunch.

The caller identified himself as "Pastor Walter" and said he wanted to find a home for a newborn infant. He got the missionaries' name from a couple attending language school where the Sprouses studied Portuguese in Campinas.

The Sprouses had considered adoption earlier after Mrs. Sprouse had several miscarriages. But as new missionaries learning a new language and culture, "adoption was the farthest thing from our minds," she said in an interview at the Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va.

Her husband, usually a risk taker, also was cautious. The couple had heard of illegal selling of infants in Brazil. What if this were some kind of scam? They sought counsel from administrators at the Foreign Mission Board.

"We were told it's often a long battle to adopt in a foreign country," said Mrs. Sprouse.

--more--

But they decided to travel to Macapa a few days later to find out more. "We were running on the Holy Spirit's power," she said.

When they arrived, the Sprouses met with the mother, a Brazilian judge and other officials to discuss guardianship. When the judge learned the couple weren't Brazilians, he first said he couldn't do anything.

"You mean that I as his mother can't do what's best for my child?" the birth mother challenged the judge. Finally, he granted written permission for the Sprouses to have custody of the child as they pursued adoption.

Sprouse was told it was illegal for him to hire a lawyer. So he studied Brazilian adoption law himself. He collected required legal documents in Brazil and the United States, sought advice from a Christian lawyer in North Carolina and enlisted a Brazilian social worker to do a required study of his family.

When the missionary had everything in place nearly 17 months later, he contacted the Macapa court, only to learn a different judge was presiding there. Officials said he now had to have a lawyer. As a foreigner, Sprouse knew that meant expensive legal fees.

He felt he had the necessary paperwork, so he convinced the judge to see him after traveling to Macapa. The judge insisted Sprouse needed a lawyer, but agreed to look at his documents. Everything was there, including a government permit allowing Southern Baptist missionaries to work in Brazil.

"I like what Baptists are doing," the judge told Sprouse.

The judge asked him to bring the birth mother in his chambers by 1 p.m. And he wanted to interview Mrs. Sprouse as soon as she could get to Macapa. Sprouse didn't know if the young mother still lived there, but he found her and got her to the courthouse in time. Later he called his wife, who quickly arranged her travel from Montes Claros, where the couple then worked as church planters. It was a 24-hour trip by plane and bus.

The trip was worth it: Two days later the judge made the adoption final. "God did things in this process that I could never have done in my own power," said Sprouse. "He opened every door."

The first door couldn't have opened at a more critical time for Carl. Shortly before "Pastor Walter" first called the Sprouses, a spiritist family offered a large sum of money for the baby. Afro-Brazilian spiritism -- Macumba, Umbanda and other forms of the occult -- is widespread in Brazil.

The desperate mother considered that option because "she didn't think she had a choice," said Mrs. Sprouse. And if she had kept the child, "her only choice would have been to put him on the street when he was 4 or 5" -- a fate that awaits many poor children.

But the young woman decided to wait, since "Pastor Walter's" week of searching for a Christian family wasn't up yet. Her choice changed her son's life forever.

"When I think of how close Carl came to being in the arms of the devil ... I know beyond a shadow of a doubt he was supposed to be with us," said Mrs. Sprouse.

--30--

(BP) photo (vertical) mailed May 27 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Romanian religious liberty
addressed by SBC guests

By Norman Miller

Baptist Press
5/31/94

BUCHAREST, Romania (BP)--In a country where Christians suffered persecution for decades, Romanian Baptists still struggle for complete religious freedom even though the communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu toppled in 1989.

Responding to the invitation of leaders in the Baptist Union of Romania to hold a forum on religious liberty, four Southern Baptist Convention entities jointly sponsored the "Religious Liberties Conference: A Free Gospel in a Free State" May 18-20 in Bucharest, Romania.

--more--

Religious liberty position papers from Americans and Romanians alike were delivered during the conference, which involved the Baptist Sunday School Board, SBC Executive Committee and Christian Life Commission, all located in Nashville, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

The forum drew nearly 100 participants, including more than 70 Romanian pastors, a Ukrainian pastor and three missionaries serving in Romania from Korea, England and Brazil. Several Romanian government officials attended, but invited officials from the Eastern Orthodox Church did not.

Underscoring the maxim, "politics makes for strange bedfellows," Paul Negrut, president-elect of the Evangelical Alliance of Romania, said during a telephone interview from London, where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in theology at London Bible College, "The (Orthodox Church is attempting to) merge with current political powers to establish a national religion, a dictatorial regime similar to those developments we see in Bulgaria and Russia today."

Numerous Romanians at the conference, pastors and leaders alike, are upset because the Orthodox Church in Romania recently declared itself the "state church." Noting there is at least a small segment of Romania's government ("ex-communists") who are still power-hungry, a pastor stood in a question-and-answer session and said, "There are those in our government today who were strong oppressors of all religions under communism, but today they just as strongly support the Orthodox Church as Romania's 'state church.'"

Nicolaie Gheorghita, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Romania, noted the continuing religious oppression, which is now instigated more by the Orthodox Church than the government. He referred to a much-cited incident where the Evangelical Alliance of Romania attempted to broadcast four Easter programs on Romanian television but was refused the air time because the Orthodox Church pressured the Romanian Parliament to cancel the programs.

Gheorghita asked, "Who gave the Orthodox patriarchy this authority and on what legal basis? Could we not already speak of a religious dictatorship in Romania?"

The theme of these questions was echoed by the president of Southeastern Seminary, Paige Patterson, in his paper, "Religious Liberty: A Crown Jewel in Our Anabaptist Heritage."

After giving a historical overview of the Anabaptist movement, Patterson noted, "Make no mistake about it, union of church and state, or even a state-sanctioned church, will inevitably be a persecuting church." Patterson later referred to "state-sponsored and protected ecclesiastical units" as being a "satanically induced" relationship.

Appealing for help in the face of this kind of oppression, Negrut, who in 1990 received the "Torch of Freedom Award" from Margaret Thatcher for his steadfast opposition to the pre-1990 communist regime in Romania, said, "Western Christianity must play an active role in influencing Eastern European governments to pursue democracy, human rights and religious freedom."

Richard Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said, "Southern Baptists can help our Romanian brothers and sisters by lifting them up in prayer; by speaking to and writing to our own government, informing U.S. officials of the Romanians' plight; by reminding the Romanian government that religious persecution of any of its people will exact a heavy toll in lost trade and standing with the U.S.; and by showing Romanian Baptists the biblical basis for religious liberty."

Dorothy Patterson, an adjunct professor at Southeastern and wife of the president, detailed the biblical basis for religious liberty in her paper, "Biblical Background and Theology of Religious Liberty." Conference participants made reference to Mrs. Patterson's paper during subsequent question-and-answer sessions, and it evoked a humorous response from a pastor and (now) parliament member who said he endured "many midnight 'devotionals' with the police as we discussed Romans chapter 13."

Another lecture which sparked discussion was presented by ethics professor Daniel Heimbach of Southeastern. Heimbach addressed the relationship between a morally responsible government and freedom of religion in his paper, "Four Views of Religious Liberty." One high-ranking government official who attended every session of the conference said of Heimbach's presentation, "I have never heard such a brilliant paper except by the most advanced scholars in Romania. Dr. Heimbach convinced me of his position, and I now have a better understanding of the significance of religious liberty."

Mark Coppenger, vice president of convention relations for the SBC Executive Committee, offered a philosophical rationale for religious liberty. He told participants that philosophical apologetics are necessary because "the people you deal with may not listen to appeals to Scripture. When we appeal for rights, we are not restricted to biblical arguments."

Coppenger warned religious oppression causes "social disorder and chaos, cultural retardation and ecclesiastical regression." His lecture was interrupted by applause when he said, "Nations which deny religious liberty are not capable of great advances in science, industry, art and literature. ... That kind of government chokes off creativity."

Southeastern professor of evangelism and church growth Phil Roberts presented the closing lecture, "Evangelism, Missions and Religious Liberty," wherein he said the "key issue in religious liberty is the freedom to evangelize and propagate the Christian faith. This was the first liberty authorities attempted to deny the New Testament church. ... And the most fundamental religious right is to speak your faith and convince others of the truth of it. ... Yet, the greatest danger comes when the church does not evangelize others."

Roberts applauded the evangelistic efforts of Romanian Baptists during years of persecution by recounting a conversation he had with a Baptist pastor while in Romania in 1975.

Roberts had asked the pastor, "What is the underground church?" He said the pastor replied, "If you are wondering whether we hold secret meetings, then there is an underground church. We sometimes have a planning meeting, teaching session or Bible study without telling others. But if you mean we are ashamed of the gospel, ashamed to be called Christians or unwilling to speak Jesus, then there is no underground church."

Three Romanian Baptist pastors presented papers during the three-day conference, all of which reflected, among other topics, the common theme of persecution and oppression of Christians in Romania both by the government and the political influence of the Orthodox Church. During question-and-answer sessions and testimony times, both public and private, stories of persecution included attempted murder, midnight police interrogation, denial of higher education, time limitations on church meetings and the repeated padlocking of Baptist churches in Romania.

The conference closed with Romanian pastors and government officials expressing gratitude for their Southern Baptist guests. A judge from Arad, Romania, said, "We can leave this conference with an optimistic spirit and positive attitude concerning the future of religious liberty in Romania. Praise God, the Lord of the universe, who cannot be defeated."

Vasile Talos, current president of the Baptist Union of Romania who for health reasons was unable to present his paper at the conference, expressed his thanks "to God and our American brothers who ... turned our eyes to the Scriptures from which they have drawn their conclusions. They explained from experience that religious liberty is worth fighting for."

Clinton signs clinic-access bill;
it's a 'farce,' CLC lawyer says By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--A new measure establishing the blockading of abortion clinics as a federal offense "is not a strike against the First Amendment," President Clinton said moments before signing it into law, but pro-life advocates sharply disagreed with his contention.

On May 26, Clinton signed The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, which targets not only the blocking of clinic entrances but also makes a federal offense of threats against women seeking abortions, vandalism of abortion clinics and violence against clinic personnel.

Pro-lifers, including many who oppose violence and do not endorse the blockading of clinics, attacked FACE as a violation of free-speech rights and as unnecessary because of other laws in existence. Many also fear the law will result in the suppression of legal activities such as sidewalk counseling and picketing, a charge which FACE supporters deny.

"FACE is a farce," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The signing ceremony was a masquerade ball for pro-aborts and the president to put on a false face that this federal law was needed to stop violence at abortion-clinic entrances."

Clinton and abortion advocates know "local laws can handle violent crimes," Whitehead said. "They want FACE to give cover for broad new federal power to make a federal felony out of what once was free speech.

"We join other pro-life leadership in deploring and condemning violence, but FACE is really about abortion politics and making federal political prisoners out of peaceful protesters."

Rep. Chris Smith, R.-N.J., charged FACE discriminates on the basis of the content of the protest.

"In the 'brave new world' of FACE, a group of pro-life protesters could block one entrance of an abortion clinic, while a completely different group engaged in a labor dispute could block another entrance of the clinic, and only the pro-life protesters would be charged as federal felons, simply because their viewpoints are disfavored by the current administration," Smith said in a written statement.

Pro-choice advocates supported FACE as necessary to protect abortion clinic workers and to ensure women have the right to obtain an abortion.

"Abortion can be a moral choice, and religiously responsible Americans want that choice to be made by women, not by legislative mandate and certainly not by terrorists," said Katherine Hancock Ragsdale, president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and an Episcopal priest, in a written statement. "To invoke the name of God to support acts of terrorism is blasphemy, repugnant to people of faith and conscience."

Clinton said, "We simply cannot -- we must not -- continue to allow the attacks, the incidents of arson, the campaigns of intimidation upon law-abiding citizens that (have) given rise to this law."

While the country is "strengthened by people whose religious convictions on this issue may be different from mine or from yours," Americans must obey the law, reduce the animosity and listen and work together across barriers in the debate over abortion, Clinton told supporters at the signing ceremony.

On the same day the bill became law, May 26, the American Life League and Operation Rescue activists filed separate suits in federal courts in Alexandria, Va., and Washington, respectively.

The maximum penalties for first-time violent offenders are one year in jail and \$100,000 in fines. For first-time non-violent offenders, the maximum penalties are six months imprisonment and \$10,000 in fines.

In May, both the Senate and House of Representatives easily passed a compromise version of the bill reported out by a conference committee of members of both houses.

The law includes a religious liberty amendment by Sen. Orrin Hatch, R.-Utah, which provides the same protections from violence and obstruction for those seeking to attend worship services as are guaranteed in the bill for those seeking to enter or working at abortion clinics. Homosexual and abortion rights activists have blocked entrance to some places of worship, disrupted services and vandalized buildings.

Supporters of the bill pressed Congress and the president to enact the legislation because they say more than 1,000 violent acts, including one murder, have occurred at abortion clinics since 1977. FACE received much of its momentum for passage in this session from the 1993 shooting death of abortion doctor David Gunn outside a Pensacola, Fla., clinic.

--30--

Coppenger targets Baptist media
as biased in coverage of issues By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
5/31/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Don't count on Baptist media to report without bias on substantive theological concerns, Mark Coppenger writes in the June/July issue of SBC Life, a publication of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, where he is vice president for convention relations.

Coppenger writes that Baptist media did not report, for example, that Russell H. Dilday Jr., then-president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1982, presented only one side of a broad debate in evangelical Christianity over the Bible in a book he wrote for use in the annual Baptist Doctrine Study in Southern Baptist churches.

Coppenger, in the two-page column titled "Who Then?" questions whether state Baptist papers, Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Press will report on conservative perspectives on various issues and asks, "... if not us," referring to SBC Life, "then who?"

Coppenger also notes he penned his column "in the interest of balance" on the reporting of Southwestern trustees' March 9 firing of Dilday.

Coppenger told Baptist Press of his rationale for penning the column: "A lot of Cooperative Program money was being used by state papers to criticize the Southwestern trustees (for their March 9 firing of Dilday at president of the SBC seminary). On the other hand, precious little was being used to hold the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship accountable. I thought I would use a little CP money to help provide balance.

"Some will gainsay my June column," Coppenger acknowledged. "I simply urge folks to read the column, my May column ('Conserve is a Transitive Verb' in SBC Life) and 'Tinker to Evers to Chance' (a column he penned in 1990) before drawing any conclusions. We're happy to supply copies." Coppenger's office may be addressed at 901 Commerce St., #750, Nashville, TN 37203.

Of state Baptist papers, Coppenger writes in his June SBC Life column, "the vast majority of editors are (How shall we put it?) unenthusiastic about the last fifteen or so presidential elections in the SBC. ... (M)ost editors are ready to hammer conservatives but infinitely oblivious to or tolerant of moderate misstatements."

Of the Baptist moderates' Associated Baptist Press, Coppenger asserts it will not report on theological concerns of conservatives "unless it decides to bite the hand that feeds it. Funded by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other strident critics of current convention leadership, ABP is ever ready to embarrass conservatives by stunningly lethargic in pursuing stories which could inconvenience the CBF. Strange behavior for a self-proclaimed 'independent' news service."

--more--

Of Baptist Press, the official SBC news service which operates under the Executive Committee, Coppenger writes that state Baptist paper editors only give it credibility if it publishes "stories which are hard on SBC trustees. Of course, by this standard, none of the state editors has credibility, for when are they hard on their own state convention trustees?"

In addition to lack of reporting on what he described as Dilday's one-sided presentation on biblical authority, Coppenger notes several other concerns that have not been handled by Baptist media:

-- an "appalling article" in the spring 1993 issue of the Southwestern Journal of Theology by then-missions instructor Henry Smith, who also holds an M.Div. and Ph.D. from Southwestern. Coppenger cites one of various passages in Smith's article reflecting his overall theme: "Reading the Bible through the spectacles of pessimism yields the conviction that most people are destined for hell because they have not heard about and believed in Christ in their lifetimes."

Quips Coppenger: "Silly us. Silly William Carey. Silly Lottie Moon."

-- a statement adopted by Southwestern's faculty in support of Dilday after his March 9 firing by trustees, which includes a reference to Dilday's 1982 book that, "Nothing in this book raises any question about the author's conservative views of the Scripture."

-- the way in which the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship counts churches.

Coppenger writes: "... here's how that works. If even a single member of the church puts a check for CBF in the offering plate and the church office forwards this designated money to the CBF office, they count this as one of their churches. No kidding. ... Unlike the SBC, it doesn't take a 'uniform church letter' to be counted. Just any kind of check. The CBF reasons that the church could say no, and so by forwarding the check, they are complicit and hence supportive. What if the SBC counted churches this way? ... Imagine the uproar. But observe the silence as the CBF does this sort of thing. It's smoke and mirrors, the sort of thing to stimulate a good investigative reporter. Why not press the CBF to publish the big list of 'their' churches. I think we'd see a lot of surprised church members."

-- involvement by Bill O'Brien, husband of Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien, in a video promoting CBF missionaries.

"Is that a story or what?" Coppenger writes. "Just imagine Betty Jo Lewis, wife of HMB president Larry Lewis, doing a tape for the CBF home mission enterprise. Kaboom! Press everywhere. 'Betty Lewis Supports CBF: Division in the Camp.' But the O'Brien story would be inconvenient, and so you never see it."

-- the extent to which Dilday's 1982 book, "Doctrine of Biblical Authority," published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Convention Press, embraced a controversial 1979 work by two Presbyterian professors, Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, "The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible," published by Harper & Row.

The 461-page Rogers/McKim book "omitted and twisted a great many things," Coppenger writes, "to demonstrate that biblical inerrancy was not the historic position of the church."

Although named 1980 "Book of the Year" by now-defunct Eternity magazine, the Rogers/McKim book stirred a strong response from other parts of the evangelical community.

Coppenger noted John D. Woodbridge, professor of church history and history of Christian thought at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., wrote a 155-page book with 63 pages of footnotes challenging the "Rogers/McKim proposal," as it was known in theological circles.

Coppenger continues, "Christianity Today editor Kenneth Kantzer wrote the foreword to Woodbridge's rebuttal. He said, among other things, 'A battle is raging within evangelical circles today. ... Although some people think that all such arguments are a useless waste of time -- like arguing how many angels can dance on the head of a pin -- the battle over the Bible and its authority is worth fighting.'"

Coppenger also cites comments by evangelical scholar J.I. Packer on the cover of the Woodbridge book: "The unpleasant task of exposing shoddy scholarship can rarely have been taken in hand with so much gentleness and grace. ... A nasty job nicely done. With courtesy and restraint Professor Woodbridge administers a series of knock-out blows to the confidently voiced claim that factual inerrancy is no authentic element in the historic Christian view of Scripture. Professor Woodbridge brings scholarly integrity and great weight of learning to the business of setting straight the record, confused by others, as to how Christians throughout the centuries have regarded the Bible."

Dilday "on the other hand," Coppenger writes, "commended Rogers/McKim to Southern Baptists, warmly citing it twenty-three times in his second and third chapters. In the later chapters, he worked from their base, doing his best to remove the term inerrancy from our working vocabulary."

Rogers, at the time a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in California, now is professor of theology at San Francisco Theological Seminary's Southern California campus. McKim, at the time a faculty member at Westminster College in Pennsylvania, now is dean at Memphis (Tenn.) Theological Seminary.

--30--

Dave Couric, free-lance writer in Dallas, contributed to this article.

Press association president
responds to Coppenger article

Baptist Press
5/31/94

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)--James Watters, president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, was asked by Baptist Press for a response to a column by Mark Coppenger titled, "Who Then?" in the June/July issue of SBC Life.

Coppenger, who contends in his column that Baptist media have an anti-conservative bias, is vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, which publishes SBC Life.

Watters, editor of the Northwest Baptist Witness and the current president of the organization of Southern Baptist state newspaper editors, wrote:

"Mark Coppenger has proven himself on other occasions to be both a skilled analyst and a faithful soldier for Southern Baptists. However, his long and quarrelsome opinion piece about the Southwestern Seminary fiasco in the June/July issue of SBC Life comes across as the work of a partisan spin doctor, rather than the effort of a journalist committed to presenting the news about the Good News.

"His technical, scholarly analysis of decade-old skirmishes used to defend badly hatched current affairs does not fit well in this expensive, new Southern Baptist publication designed to tell the good things happening in Southern Baptist life today. Nor does his attempt to make scapegoats of Baptist newsjournals for the uproar which Southwestern trustee actions have caused among Southern Baptists across the nation.

"It is paradoxical that Coppenger, the advocate of good news journalism, would allow himself to publish such rancor about fellow Southern Baptist editors and their publications. This is uncomfortably like the baiting used by secular reporters in hopes of provoking an ill-phrased response. It is certainly journalism unworthy of SBC Life.

"Coppenger is clearly wrong in his assumption that Baptist Press earns its credibility with newsjournal editors by being 'hard on SBC trustees,' as well as in his strange generalization that 'none of the state editors has credibility' because they are unwilling to be hard on their own state convention trustees.

"Far from being cozy, the relationship between Baptist Press and the Southern Baptist Press Association is built on mutual commitment to objectivity and balance in reporting the news. Any BP news story which makes it into print in Baptist newsjournals does so because it is believed by the individual editor to meet these strict professional ideals and has high news value for the readers of the publication involved.

--more--

"I could be more charitable about Professor Coppenger's eagerness to give wholesale failing marks to Baptist newsjournals in general and the 19 Southern Baptist Press Association editors he cites in particular, if he showed some understanding of the necessity for treating readers with the honesty about the news required to maintain their respect -- and their subscriptions.

"I would feel better if, in volunteering to become the publication to tell Southern Baptist what they need to know, Coppenger had candidly admitted that his readers are mostly church professionals whose complimentary subscriptions are paid directly by the Cooperative Program. Which means, of course, that any trouble provoked by this crusade against fellow Southern Baptist editors and their newsjournals will come from words not intended for the eyes and ears of grass-roots Baptist church members, the constituency of the newsjournals being criticized.

"Which raises the question about where Editor Coppenger is headed with SBC Life. In replacing the old Baptist Program in September 1993, SBC Life was given a mandate to provide pastors and other church professionals wholesome, good news about Southern Baptist life. By summarily dismissing Baptist newsjournals and Baptist Press, both which have long and respected places in Southern Baptist journalism, SBC Life would seem to be seeking an absolutely clear field of fire, enabling it to blast away all opposing views even before its maiden year of good news journalism has been completed.

"Those who pay the bills for Southern Baptist journalism will ultimately decide the kind of journals they need and can support. SBC Life is certainly on full parity with Baptist state and regional newsjournals in that respect."

--30--

Accrediting agencies review
Southwestern, Dilday firing

Baptist Press
5/31/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Two accrediting agencies sent a joint "fact-finding" team to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary May 23-25 to review concerns stemming from the March 9 firing of Russell H. Dilday Jr. as seminary president.

Bill Tolar, acting seminary president, said he does not expect harsh treatment from the two accrediting agencies.

Written notification of the visit from the Association of Theological Schools and the Southern Association of College and Schools, Tolar recounted, described it "a focused visit" specifically on the Dilday matter, not the institution in general, and "a visit without prejudice."

Tolar said the five-member team, which included an ATS staff member and a SACS staff member, spent a full day, May 24, at the seminary to interview current and past trustee officers, Dilday, faculty, administrative staff and elected student leaders.

According to James T. Rogers, director of SACS' commission on colleges, representatives of Southwestern will be invited to appear before a commission subcommittee June 23 in Atlanta to respond to any recommendations in the fact-finding team's report and to answer any questions raised by the subcommittee.

The full commission will vote on any official actions by SACS June 25, Rogers said.

Otherwise, he said, "There's not a great deal I can say," explaining, "We have disclosure policies."

Daniel Aleshire, ATS associate director, told Baptist Press, "Our guidelines are that the report is a report to the commission on accrediting ... We do not divulge the contents of the reports."

The ATS commission will meet June 2-3 and in January and can call sessions between the meetings as needed, Aleshire said.

Whenever the commission acts on the report, disclosure of ATS actions rests with the school, he said.

--more--

Tolar, told by Associated Baptist Press May 26, that a professor said the school would be put on probation, disagreed.

"I did not get the impression, personally, they were going to put us on probation," Tolar replied.

Tolar told Baptist Press he felt the ABP story, written by editor Greg Warner, was unfair in not identifying that his response was to an alleged statement by an unidentified professor.

--30--

Compiled by Art Toalston and Herb Hollinger.

Florida church to open books,
pay court costs in lawsuit

Baptist Press
5/31/94

SANFORD, Fla. (BP)--A Florida church will allow a former church member to examine its financial records and pay court costs for the lawsuit, complying with a local judge's order.

According to William "Bob" Parker, pastor of First Baptist Church of Markham Woods in Lake Mary, the church decided to obey the Jan. 18 order by Seminole County Circuit Judge Newman Brock even though the appeals process has not been completed.

Ann Haynes, a former member who was removed from the membership last year, will be allowed to see the records although Parker contends she has already seen them. She had filed suit charging the church and Parker with misuse of funds.

The church also will pay more than \$13,000 in court costs to cover Haynes' attorney fees. The church and Parker chose to comply with the court order by May 25 or face a contempt of court citation.

Parker told Baptist Press, because of a "very biased judge" the church would have to comply with his ruling although the appeals process could have continued in 5th District Court. Earlier that court granted a stay in the judge's order, then revoked it. An appeal to the state supreme court was rejected when the court ruled it would not exercise jurisdiction in the case.

Parker, a member of the SBC Executive Committee, said the church leadership is looking at all possibilities and whether further action is contemplated.

Parker claims an audit of the church records revealed nothing to substantiate Haynes' charges. In fact, Parker said Haynes has already seen the records but wanted the church to pay her attorney's fees.

Haynes' membership was terminated Aug. 4 in a deacons meeting. She received a letter, dated Aug. 19, informing her she was no longer a member but she contended the church's constitution requires terminations to be voted on at regular church meetings. However, the church claimed an amendment allows deacons to remove members.

In its response to the lawsuit, the church said Haynes was ousted because of poor attendance, unchristian conduct and a refusal to work out conflicts within the church.

--30--

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37203

Southern Baptist Library and
Archives