
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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Raid on Waco cult brings
Baptist hospital to action

By Toby Druin and Ken Camp

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Federal agents received a hail of gunfire when they knocked at the door of a man who claims to be Jesus Christ. Later they were given a healing hand and comfort from a Texas Baptist hospital that ministers in Jesus' name.

Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center in Waco received 16 of the casualties of the Feb. 28 raid by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms on a religious cult housed in a 77-acre "Mt. Carmel" compound 10 miles northeast of Waco.

Two of the ATF agents were dead on arrival and a third died at the hospital. One other ATF officer and two cult members also were killed but were not brought to Hillcrest.

Seven of the injured were hospitalized with a variety of gunshot wounds, although all were listed in stable condition two days following the incident.

They were wounded when a firefight erupted as ATF agents served an arrest warrant on David Koresh, also known as Vernon Howell, leader of the Branch Davidians, which split off from the Seventh-day Adventist Church almost 60 years ago.

Koresh, 33, claims to be Jesus Christ and to hold the keys to the "seven seals" described in Revelation. But he also has been accused of many crimes, including child molestation, and reportedly has 15 wives. The ATF raid Feb. 28, however, was staged to arrest him on federal weapons charges and to search the compound for automatic weapons and homemade bombs.

The shooting began shortly after 9 a.m. Sunday morning. A force of several dozen ATF officers moved on the rambling compound. But when the arrest warrant was served at the door they were met with a hail of gunfire. Shots were exchanged for more than a half hour. A cease fire was arranged so both groups could remove their dead and wounded.

The Hillcrest Medical Center staff had no advance warning that such an event was in the works, but it didn't take long for them to respond.

Benita Jennings, an emergency-room nurse and member of First Baptist Church of Hubbard, near Waco, said she arrived at the hospital at 11:30, and the first of three ambulances, each with several ATF wounded, arrived within an hour.

She worked triage, directing patients to various levels of care, and was immediately struck, she said, by the spirit of camaraderie among the ATF officers. The first ambulance had an ATF agent in the front seat and two in the back of the ambulance, one already dead. The man in the front seat had lost a thumb to a bullet, she said, but he refused to get out of the ambulance until the others were cared for.

Another ATF agent in a later ambulance "kept asking about the others," she said. "He had heard one had been killed, and when I told him it was true he cried. He cried again when he found another agent from his squad had died."

Jennings works as an emergency medical technician and is accustomed to seeing blood and gunshot wounds, but she said she had never seen so much blood or such bad wounds.

Jennings spent all of Sunday and Monday at the hospital, napping when she could and waiting for an expected second surge of gunshot victims from the compound.

"I haven't had time to think how this is going to affect me," she said late Monday afternoon. "You can't let it get to you at the time. Sometimes you want to cry and break down, but you learn to deal with it then and break down afterward. I think God is the one who keeps me together. I don't believe a non-Christian could do it. I don't know of anyone who is in the emergency room who doesn't go to church."

Rebecca Adams, another emergency-room nurse and wife of James Adams, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mertens, heard about the shootings soon after she returned home from church and immediately drove to Waco, arriving shortly after the first ambulance had arrived.

She too was impressed with the esprit de corps exhibited by the ATF agents.

"They are incredible men," she said. "They were very stoic. No matter how badly they were hurt, they all wanted somebody else treated before them. None of them complained. We offered them pain medicine, but they turned it down when anyone else would have been crying for it."

"I remember them being so quiet. They must have been going through emotional turmoil over seeing their co-workers who had fallen."

Many were visited within hours by family members, she noted, but others remained alone, and her heart went out to them, she said. "There's a lot of emotional, spiritual need. It's a void you can see when you look at them."

Adams said she later visited the men in their rooms to let them know someone was there who cared.

She also found time to call her father, Roger Reed, pastor of Bruceville Baptist Church, who assured her his church would have special prayer for everyone concerned.

George Humbert, director of Hillcrest's emergency-room services, said he found ATF officers in full battle gear when he got to the emergency room. There were rumors that the Davidian cult would seek reprisals. The ATF agents "immediately secured the area and began to ask for phones."

A spirit of family often develops between the emergency-room staff and

law enforcement officers who bring in victims, Humbert said. The ATF officers "become a part of us," he said.

The ATF has its own peer-support team made up of other ATF officers who have been involved in shooting incidents, and they came to Hillcrest to minister to their fellow officers. The bureau also has a psychologist, Harold Solomon, from Washington, D.C., who came to help.

But Hillcrest's chaplaincy corps -- director Curtis Holland, Hazel Thompson and Jake Remenschneider -- bore the brunt of the counseling load immediately.

Holland, a member of Western Heights Baptist Church in Waco, said much of his work involves comforting family members and easing them into their first meeting with their injured loved one.

A veteran of 20 years at Hillcrest, Holland said he was impressed with how the whole "team" at the hospital was drawn together, working with others to get the job done.

"It becomes a reminder of what a wonderful experience it is to be in a Christian environment and see the arm of the church reach out in a different way than hearing it in a sermon," he said.

Richard Scott, president of the medical center, said one of his roles in such an emergency is to provide any needed interpretation of hospital policy. "But our people know that the best interpretation of policy is always that which shows that we are working in a Christian environment, to put our patients first, to work in teamwork situations and be respectful of them.

"We do all kinds of disaster drills to try to prepare for anything," he said, "but we have never had a drill on a situation of this type. This isn't the type of thing you expect to happen in Waco, Texas."

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WMU should submit to SBC control
or lose influence, says Rogers

By Robert Dilday

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (ABP) -- Woman's Missionary Union may lose its role in decision-making in the Southern Baptist Convention unless it submits to control by the SBC, Adrian Rogers warned Feb. 18.

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church near Memphis, Tenn., told visiting staff and missionaries of the SBC Foreign Mission Board that WMU must be "hard-wired" into the convention structure or lose key positions on SBC policy-making bodies.

"Hard wiring," Rogers said, would mean permitting the SBC to elect WMU's governing board, which since 1888 has consisted of representatives chosen by state WMU organizations.

A three-time president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Rogers is the most influential leader among SBC conservatives, who now control virtually all SBC agencies.

Although Rogers has been mentioned as a possible candidate for the vacant presidency of the FMB, none of the participants contacted said they felt Rogers was lobbying for the position. Instead, they said, he appeared to be speaking as a leader of SBC conservatives.

Rogers also said he regrets the "feminization" of missions, insisting

that missions promotion should be led not by WMU but by pastors and by leaders of Brotherhood, a men's missions organization active in many Southern Baptist churches.

Woman's Missionary Union has taken the lead in missions education and promotion since its formation in 1888 as an auxiliary to the SBC. In a historic decision Jan. 10, WMU's executive board modified the organization's century-old exclusive support of the SBC's Foreign and Home Mission boards and agreed to provide non-financial support to other missionary-sending groups.

That change has disturbed SBC conservatives who fear WMU is moving to support the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Rogers discussed the recent changes during a two-hour meeting in his church office with FMB personnel, who were leading a world missions conference Feb. 15-19 at nearby Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

The meeting came just days before the winter session of the SBC Executive Committee, which voted Feb. 23 to ask WMU to restore its "exclusive relationship" with the SBC or risk losing its auxiliary status. Executive Committee officers also met privately with WMU leaders Feb. 21, during which they reportedly registered their concern about a WMU-Fellowship tie.

The Mid-America missions conference was the first such conference sponsored by the FMB at a seminary not supported by the Cooperative Program, the SBC's unified giving plan. Mid-America is a conservative institution closely linked with Rogers and Bellevue Baptist Church. Graduates from the seminary are allowed to serve as FMB missionaries.

Attempts to contact Rogers for comment were unsuccessful.

FMB participants described their meeting with Rogers as non-confrontational, but several said they left saddened that Rogers and other key conservative leaders now regard WMU with new suspicion.

"I felt a deep sense of sadness that WMU, which has supported and prayed for missionaries, could so quickly be seen in an ominous light," said one participant who asked not to be identified.

Among those attending the session were three FMB vice presidents -- Sam James, Harlan Spurgeon and Bill Wakefield -- and staff members David Cornelius, Irma Duke, Don Reavis, Herman Russell and Kenn Shirley.

Also present was John Floyd, a Mid-America vice president recently elected to administer the FMB's work in Europe. Several furloughing missionaries assisting in the missions conference also attended.

"I would not describe the meeting as heated or intense," said Reavis. "Nothing was said in rancor. It was more conversational in tone."

Both Reavis and Duke said -- and Spurgeon confirmed -- that Rogers focused on WMU's role as an auxiliary, comparing it to an auxiliary engine on a train which has no power of its own but only assists the main engine.

Rogers maintained the changes voted by WMU in January have given the organization a program of its own and it is now more like a parachurch group, Reavis said.

A key concern of Rogers', participants agreed, was that WMU holds seats on the SBC Executive Committee, the Inter-Agency Council -- composed of the chief executives of each SBC agency -- and the Missions Education Council, which coordinates the SBC's efforts to raise missions awareness.

"He (Rogers) seemed to be saying, 'Why should WMU have that kind of influence if they're only an auxiliary and we (the SBC) don't elect their trustees?'" Duke reported.

Concerning the "feminization" of missions, one participant recalled

Rogers saying missions needed a "more masculine look" and that it should be pastors who are leaders of missions in the local church.

"He (Rogers) said that a dichotomy existed between pastors and the WMU," another participant said. "He said pastors felt they were being shut out of missions promotion by the WMU."

Although Rogers apparently was expressing his own opinion regarding WMU, several participants said he spoke "authoritatively." "He had a message he wanted to share," said one.

"His opinion is one that carries weight," said one participant, "and may indicate where we (the SBC leadership) are going (regarding WMU)."

"I think he wanted our understanding and support for his ideas (regarding WMU)," Duke said.

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Nazi-like barbarism looms behind
abortion, mercy-killing, Land warns

By Ray Waddle

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- America is sliding into Nazi-like barbarism by tolerating abortion, mercy-killing and fetal-tissue experimentation, Richard Land told a conference on medical ethics.

Some 500 people attended the March 1 opening sessions of the three-day conference, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. They heard speakers blame sexual immorality as the cause of AIDS and predict that legal euthanasia eventually will lead to "incest rights" and legalized sex with children.

"The Nazi death camps of 50 years ago and the more recent Cambodian genocide illustrate what an alarmingly dangerous place the world is for those too young, too few, too old, too weak, too handicapped or too ill to defend their right to life when the sanctity of any human life is denied," said Land, executive director of the CLC.

"Will it happen here? Much depends on the faith community. We are the last line of defense against a rapid descent into an evil abyss of barbarism."

Abortion, mercy-killing and homosexuality were heavily assaulted by speakers March 1.

Land argued that legalized abortion has decimated the nation's pool of talent by denying life to one third of a generation since 1973.

"In our killing of 1.6 million children every year, have we aborted the girl God sent to find the cure for cancer? Have we destroyed the boy God sent to find the cure for AIDS?" Land said.

One physician said the AIDS epidemic was made possible by a climate of increased homosexual activity and tolerance of homosexuality over the past three decades, even though the Bible condemns it.

The physician, Franklin Payne, a professor at the Medical College of Georgia, said gay legitimacy won a huge victory in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the category of mental disorders in its official manual.

"... It was essentially a religious 'blessing' on homosexuality that fueled the growth of homosexuality to levels almost unimaginable," Payne said.

With 1 million Americans now estimated to have the HIV virus, Payne warned that the medical costs of caring for people with AIDS will only skyrocket until people return to abstinence and Christian morality.

"Medical costs are out of control because morality is out of control," he said.

"The American people have placed their hope in medicine instead of Jesus Christ. The god of medicine will as surely fail them as any other god."

Mark Coppenger, vice president of the SBC Executive Committee, used a literary device made popular by Christian author C. S. Lewis -- "letters" from a devil to a "trainee" -- to argue that the exaltation of personal autonomy is being used to justify mercy-killing and other threats to the "right to life."

"If we can push through the right to euthanize, we'll go to work on incest rights," Coppenger's read from a letter sent by his fictional "devil" to an earthly trainee named "Hemlock."

"Some even say we've got a shot at legalizing pederasty (sodomy with boys). Who's to deny Johnny's right to have sex with Uncle Bud if both consent? Don't you see the possibilities if freedom is your only value?"

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Alliance to continue
but with changed role

By Greg Warner

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (ABP) -- Although the Alliance of Baptists has grown smaller in recent years, its importance has not diminished and its future still holds promise, according to the group's executive director, Stan Hastey.

The Alliance was formed in 1987 by progressive Southern Baptists dissatisfied with conservative domination of the Southern Baptist Convention. But the Alliance has lost about a third of its members in recent years, in part because of the emergence of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a broader coalition of Baptist moderates and progressives.

The Alliance is left with a "rock-solid" core membership of about 120 churches (with 60,000 members) and 2,000 individuals, Hastey told Alliance members Feb. 26 at the group's annual meeting in Daytona Beach, Fla.

"Whereas our numbers are somewhat smaller, the level of commitment to the Alliance from this core constituency is deeper today than at any previous point," he said.

Although the Alliance and the Fellowship appeared headed for a merger two years ago, Hastey said, "it became clear to me ... that merger was no longer a likely outcome."

Hastey said it appears now the Alliance and Fellowship will maintain separate identities and perform distinct functions within the larger moderate movement in the SBC. Both groups have adopted a statement to that effect, which also indicates they will cooperate on certain mission projects and perhaps eventually an joint missions offering.

The Fellowship has agreed to fund about half of the Alliance's mission projects for 1993. Hastey said that will provide some relief to the Alliance's tight budget and, coupled with increased contributions from some

Alliance churches, allow the organization to continue without cutting staff.

During the annual meeting Feb. 25-27, the Alliance adopted a 1993 budget of \$245,020, which does not include funding for mission projects. A global missions offering, with a goal of \$65,000, would fund the projects retained by the Alliance.

Participants in the annual meeting voiced agreement with plans for a continued -- though altered -- role for the Alliance. "I am more excited about where the Alliance is today than at any time in the past two years," said Tim Turnham of Silver Spring, Md.

During the annual meeting, Turnham, chairperson of the Alliance's public relations committee, moderated a listening session in which several participants thanked the Alliance for providing a haven for disenfranchised Baptists, including women clergy, divorced clergy, internationals, laypersons and others who feel rejected by the conservative-dominated SBC.

Steve Lucas, a pastor from Longwood Hills, Fla., said his divorce "felt like a ministerial death knell." But the Alliance provides a place "for those of us who have been tremendously wounded," he said. Rather than a death knell, Lucas said, his own divorce has become a "credential for helping others who are in similar pain."

Hastey said the Alliance could play a role in the "reconfiguring of Baptist life in this country."

Given the Alliance's commitment to inclusiveness and dialogue with other Baptist groups -- such as the American Baptist Churches that are prevalent in the North and the predominantly black Progressive National Baptist Convention -- it is "entirely feasible" that the Alliance could be the catalyst for major changes in the Baptist landscape, Hastey said.

"We face a new day in America's churches," he said.

Leaders from both the ABC and PNBC brought greetings to Alliance participants. Walter Parrish, executive minister for ABC churches in the South, said his convention has "been with you in this struggle from the beginning ... and will be with you all the way."

Tyrone Pitts, general secretary of the PNBC, likened the birth of the Alliance to the emergence of his own convention from the "conservatism and mediocrity" of the National Baptist Convention.

The Alliance heard reports on ongoing dialogues with both the ABC and PNBC. Hastey, noting "a discernable trend among more progressive (Southern Baptist) congregations to withdraw or nominalize SBC participation," said the Alliance will continue encouraging those congregations to consider affiliating with American Baptists.

Richard Groves of Winston-Salem, N.C., said the Alliance and Progressive Baptists are planning a joint study of racism and perhaps simultaneous annual meetings in the future.

Also bringing greetings to the Alliance meeting was Hardy Clemons, moderator-elect of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Clemons, who also is a member of the Alliance, serves as pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville, N.C., where Alliance president Ann Quattlebaum is a member.

Clemons urged members of both the Alliance and the Fellowship "not to buy into, or be pulled into, an us-versus-them attitude among fellow open-minded, seeking Baptists."

While both groups claim to be inclusive, Clemons said some people "are only inclusive up to a point" -- the point at which the need to be right supersedes the commitment to be tolerant of others.

"I think it's time for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the

Alliance to link arms with brother and sister Baptists of all persuasions," he said.

In a major address, Walker Knight of Atlanta contrasted the differing public perceptions of the Fellowship and the Alliance by drawing a parallel to two prominent civil-rights activists -- the non-violent Martin Luther King and the more radical Malcolm X.

In the Alliance's annual covenant address, Knight, publisher of the moderate newspaper Baptists Today, said the confrontive approach of Malcolm X was distorted by his critics, creating a public perception of him as an extremist.

"It is worth reminding ourselves at this point that this very distortion of who Malcolm X was and what he was about actually worked to the benefit of Dr. King's movement because it gave society, in King, a less threatening option."

The Fellowship likewise has benefitted from a public perception of the Alliance as extreme, Knight said, "by offering a softer, more inclusive option that has been less threatening to many people."

Hastey, in his report, said he was grateful the Alliance has championed some of the "hard issues" of the moderate movement -- such as ecumenism and women clergy -- even though that has allowed some churches to reject the organization as too liberal.

He said the Alliance has always been fueled more by "ideas" than by the need to build denominational structures. Ideas, he said, "are the only currency we have."

Although the Alliance has lacked the financial strength to build those structures, he said, it can claim some credit as the "seedbed" for "several seedling organizations that now dot our changing Baptist landscape," including the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, the Formations Sunday school curriculum now published by Smyth and Helwys, and even the Fellowship.

He encouraged Alliance members to "rejoice in the harvest we are beginning to witness."

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BJC panel accepts settlement,
told future bright for RFRA

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Leaders of the Baptist Joint Committee voted unanimously March 1 to settle a dispute with the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee over a \$300,000 capital-needs account.

The action was taken by the BJC executive committee at its spring meeting. The BJC panel also was told that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, described by BJC General Counsel Oliver Thomas as "the most important religious-liberty legislation of our time," may receive a major boost toward enactment when it is reintroduced March 4.

James Dunn, BJC executive director, praised the work of many religious leaders but singled out the efforts of Thomas, who chairs the broad coalition of religious groups backing RFRA, and BJC Associate General Counsel Brent Walker in pursuing its passage for nearly three years.

"It is exactly this sort of work from which they should not be distracted by any internal Baptist dispute," Dunn said, referring to the

\$300,000 account.

The dispute over the funds arose after the Southern Baptist Foundation declined the BJC's request to release the funds to purchase a building for its Washington headquarters. The SBC later authorized reallocation of the capital-needs account.

In recent years the SBC, one of the founding members of the BJC, dropped its financial support and severed ties with the religious-liberty agency.

The settlement calls for the SBC to pay the BJC \$100,000 in four annual payments of \$25,000 beginning April 1 and for the BJC to relinquish claims to the \$300,000 account set aside for BJC capital needs by the SBC during the 1960s. The agreement was accepted by the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 23.

The settlement also requires officers and staffs of both organizations to avoid "impugning the motives and integrity of the other party, its officers, staffs, or members, over the facts and circumstances surrounding this controversy."

The settlement acknowledges that the controversy "has constituted a distraction to both parties."

Citing the drain on resources and the uncertainty of the outcome associated with seeking to recover the funds through a lawsuit, Dunn and Thomas recommended that the panel accept the settlement.

"It is not the best of possibilities and it is certainly not the worst of possibilities, given the uncertainties of litigation," said Tyrone Pitts, BJC chairman and general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.

Pitts, who joined Thomas in negotiating the settlement with SBC Executive Committee President Morris Chapman and legal counsel James Guenther, said, "It was in their best interest to settle, just as it was in our best interest."

Pitts told his colleagues that in the long run, the BJC's willingness to accept the settlement will pay dividends larger than the \$200,000 the agency is foregoing. The BJC already had received \$81,000 in interest accrued by the foundation account.

In a formal statement issued March 2, Pitts said the BJC "would have preferred to receive a larger monetary settlement, but the BJC Executive Committee wanted to take the high road, as we believe our mandate to follow our risen Savior compels this."

Pitts also said the BJC "must be about the business of replacing the \$200,000 we have lost" and called on "our Baptist friends nationwide to join us in the fight for religious liberty by contributing to the Baptist Joint Committee."

In a report to the BJC executive committee, Thomas said the future looks brighter than ever for RFRA, legislation that would restore a high level of protection for the rights of Americans to practice their religion without government interference.

The legislation was first proposed after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in April 1990 that government no longer needed to show a "compelling" reason to restrict religious practice.

Thomas told the BJC panel that the legislation, backed by a broad coalition of religious groups, may soon receive a major boost because the one major U.S. religious group opposing RFRA, the United States Catholic Conference, is considering dropping its opposition.

If that occurs, Thomas said, "we hope to have the bill on the

president's desk by April 13, which is the 250th anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's birth."

Thomas told the BJC panel that the Supreme Court's decision to reduce the level of protection for free-exercise rights has had sweeping effects. "Now more than 60 cases have been decided against religious claimants," he said.

In other business, the BJC Executive Committee approved an audit by Johnson and Scarborough, certified public accountants, for the 15-month period Dec. 31, 1992, and authorized a subcommittee to study BJC board membership and bring a recommendation 30 days prior to the agency's full board meeting in October.

-- By Larry Chesser and Pam Parry

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CLARIFICATION: In the Feb. 25 ABP story "HMB study goes easy on Masons...", please consider substituting the following paragraph for the first paragraph. It is more accurate and less vulnerable to misinterpretation.

ATLANTA (ABP) -- A study of the possible evils of Masonic teachings concludes the Southern Baptist Convention should not oppose Freemasonry, but the unreleased study is already raising a stink.

***** END *****