



# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626  
Fax: 904.262.7745  
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Nashville, Tennessee

March 9, 2000

(00-20)

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Religion becomes a wedge in 2000 presidential race
- Baptists purify water for Mozambique refugees
- Referendum banning gay marriages passes easily in California
- Baptist Joint Committee installs Brent Walker in executive post
- Cooperation key to missions in next century, speakers say
- 'Humility' recurring theme at missions conference
- 'Target' a poor metaphor for witnessing, experts say

## Religion becomes a wedge in 2000 presidential race

By Bob Allen

(ABP) -- The old saying that religion and politics don't mix must have never seemed truer than to Republicans who now must try to rebuild a party fractured by a presidential primary that pundits dubbed the "Holy War."

While scuffles between the Religious Right and fiscal conservatives have grown commonplace in the GOP, observers said that not since concerns were raised in 1960 about John F. Kennedy being a Catholic has faith formed such a wedge in secular politics.

The original Christian-right favorite, Missouri Sen. John Ashcroft, decided not to run, leaving candidates such as Gary Bauer, Pat Buchanan, Alan Keyes and Steve Forbes vying for votes among religious conservatives.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush, a Methodist and political centrist, was not at first thought to be a part of that equation.

But the Washington Post reported last August that Bush was conducting a quiet outreach to blunt complaints that he is soft on abortion and family values. The newspaper said Bush was assembling a group of prominent religious leaders to vouch for him. It identified top Southern Baptist leaders in the circle as Southern Baptist Convention president Paige Patterson; former president Ed Young; retired Houston appeals-court judge Paul Pressler and Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Land said on his radio program in November that because he is a denominational official, he would not make an endorsement. "It's the George Bush campaign's job to convince Southern Baptists and evangelicals, not mine," Land said in a news story in Baptist Press.

Bush's personal faith entered into political discussion in the 2000 presidential race Dec. 13 at a Republican debate in Iowa. Asked what "political philosopher" he most admired, Bush responded: "Christ, because he changed my heart."

Asked to elaborate, Bush said it would be hard to explain to someone who isn't a Christian. "When you turn your heart and your life over to Christ, when you accept Christ as the Savior, it changes your heart and changes your life," he said.

Skeptics said Bush's answer sounded contrived and accused him of pandering to religious conservatives. Others, however, said Bush's piety resonated with evangelical voters.

"I was watching the debate with my wife and daughter in the room, neither of whom are political junkies," Land told the Washington Post. "And when they heard that answer they both stopped what they were doing, looked at me, and said, 'Wow.'"

"He talks their language," Land explained. "Most evangelicals who heard that question probably thought, 'That's exactly the way I would have answered it.'"

Things heated up in February leading up to the South Carolina primary, essentially a two-man race between Bush and John McCain, who was raised an Episcopalian but regularly attends a Southern Baptist church, North Phoenix Baptist Church, in Arizona.

Pat Robertson, saying McCain's stance on campaign-finance reform would hurt groups like his Christian Coalition, urged members to oppose the Arizona senator. Bush supporters were accused of "push polling," a form of political solicitation in which phone calls under the guise of an opinion survey made derogatory or misleading comments about McCain. A taped phone message called one of McCain's top advisers "a vicious bigot."

McCain blasted Bush for speaking at Bob Jones University, a frequent stop for Republican candidates, and not challenging the fundamentalist school's ban on interracial dating and its position criticizing the Catholic Church.

Bush called it a missed opportunity. McCain supporters in Michigan immediately accused Bush of tolerating "anti-Catholic bigotry," a charge that Bush denied.

Then, in what many viewed as a fatal mistake, McCain in a Feb. 28 speech in Virginia lashed out at leaders of the Religious Right. Criticizing "self-appointed leaders" who were opposing his candidacy, McCain said, "Neither party should be defined by pandering to the outer reaches of American politics and the agents of intolerance, whether they be Louis Farrakhan or Al Sharpton on the left, or Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell on the right."

McCain described Bush as "a Pat Robertson Republican who will lose to Al Gore" and later described the two religious leaders as an "evil influence" in the Republican Party.

Bauer, who lent his support to McCain after dropping out of the race, said Christians should still vote for McCain but that he was wrong to label Robertson and Falwell as extremists.

Exit polls in Super Tuesday primaries March 7, in which Bush all but sewed up the nomination, showed that while McCain did not gain support among Catholics, evangelicals swung strongly toward Bush.

The SBC's Land observed: "I predicted when I heard John McCain's outrageous remarks ... that Sen. McCain was going to end up accomplishing what no conservative Christian individual or group has been able to do, and that is fully energize and engage Christian conservatives in the public-policy process."

"Many Christian conservatives had become extremely disillusioned with the public-policy process and were at best ambivalent at participating in this year's election," Land told Baptist Press.

McCain downplayed the impact of his controversial remarks, attributing the losses to negative campaign ads. He said if he had it to do over, he would still make the speech and predicted that identification with the party's right wing would dog Bush into the general election.

Regardless of who gets the blame, using religion to manipulate voters hurts the political process, said one religious leader and veteran political observer.

"The big losers in this campaign are American voters and religion," said Welton Gaddy, a Baptist minister who is executive director of the Interfaith Alliance.

When "religion becomes a political football, religion is hurt and government is hurt," said Gaddy, who wrote a 1996 book titled "Faith and Politics: What's a Christian to Do?"

"We caution against the identification of religion with any one political point of view," Gaddy said, adding that "candidates are manipulating religion for their own purposes, and tragically making religion a ballot issue rather than a matter of personal faith."

A Baptist ethicist in Nashville, Tenn., however, predicted that voters can expect religion to continue to play a divisive role in presidential campaigns.

"Politicians will continue to use religion as a dividing wedge, and religious leaders will use politics as a battering ram for their agendas," said Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Furthermore, Parham continued, "Conservative Catholics and even fundamentalists will use and be used by Democrats and Republicans for their unholy quest for power."

On the Democrat side, religious discussion has been more muted. Vice President Al Gore, a Southern Baptist, has talked about his faith but has not made it a central issue. When Gore received an endorsement from a pulpit during a worship service, however, it led a church-state organization to file a complaint about the church's tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service

Gore's challenger, Sen. Bill Bradley, was active as a young man in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and once witnessed for Christ at a Billy Graham crusade. But in recent years he has become more private about his faith and refused to discuss it in his campaign.

-30-

-- Kenny Byrd contributed to this story.

## **Baptists purify water for Mozambique refugees**

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baptist volunteers from Texas, North Carolina and South Africa are purifying water for flood victims who have relocated to refugee camps in southeastern Mozambique.

Cyclone Eline and subsequent storms have forced more than one million people in southern Mozambique from their homes over the past month. In addition to destroying villages and displacing residents, the floodwaters introduced cholera, water-borne bores and other diseases and parasites into the available water supplies.

The Baptist disaster-relief workers set up two water-purification units along a creek near Jantigue, a few kilometers east of the refugee camps, and they pumped the purified water into a portable swimming pool for storage.

Each of the two units, assembled in South Africa by the Texas Baptists from locally available components, is capable of purifying eight gallons of water per minute.

Tanker trucks provided by the Save the Children organization have delivered the water to the refugees in at least four camps.

"We had to search and search just to find water halfway decent enough to pump through the units," said team leader Dick Talley, logistics coordinator for Texas Baptist Men.

Reporting to the Dallas office of Texas Baptist Men by satellite phone, Talley explained that much of the water was so filled with silt that it clogged the water purification units' filters and hoses.

"We finally found some water that was running through some reeds that was fairly clear."

Even that water source temporarily became unavailable, however, when another round of torrential rain swept through the area, stirring up sediment in the creek bottom.

It was the latest in a series of challenges that the Baptist volunteers have faced since leaving the United States on Feb. 28.

The first came when rains delayed their entry into Mozambique from South Africa. However, that delay gave the volunteers time to replace a faulty water pump on one of the five vehicles they used to transport their equipment into Mozambique. It also allowed them the opportunity to test the water purifiers that they built locally and to train volunteers with the Baptist Union in South Africa in their operation.

When the mission is completed, the units will remain with the South African Baptists, with whom Southern Baptists have worked for about 50 years. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina currently has a missions partnership with the Baptist Union of South Africa.

After the rains slowed down, next came the problem of transportation. In a five-vehicle caravan, the team entered Maputo, South Africa, on the one main road that was not submerged.

Once in Maputo, the Missionary Aviation Fellowship took Talley and a representative from the North Carolina team on an aerial survey of the region. On a three-hour flight, the team flew an arc more than 100 miles north of Maputo and saw no significant dry ground.

Initially, the volunteers thought the only way they could get their heavy equipment to refugees near Chibuto was by barge.

But then the local port authority helicopters, together with Puma heavy-utility military helicopters from France and England, became available to fly the Baptist volunteers and their equipment into the region.

Before they left Maputo, they experienced another setback. Harry Campbell, a volunteer from Killeen, Texas, stepped into a hole and suffered a hairline fracture to his ankle. He was transported back to Johannesburg, South Africa, where he received medical treatment. Campbell returned to Texas on March 8.

Talley, Mel Goodwin from Kilgore, Texas, and the North Carolina volunteers are due to return to the United States in mid March. A second volunteer team was slated to leave Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport on March 9 and was due to arrive in Johannesburg the next day.

Jim Furgerson, executive director-treasurer of Texas Baptist Men, asked believers to pray for the safety of both the outgoing and incoming volunteers. He noted that the area in which the volunteers are camping not only carries the risk of water-borne diseases and parasites but also venomous snakes that are seeking higher ground.

## Referendum banning gay marriages passes easily in California

By Mark Wyatt

FRESNO, Calif. (ABP) -- California voters March 7 overwhelmingly approved a statewide ballot initiative declaring "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid and recognized in California."

The victory for Proposition 22 won unanimous praise from Baptist leaders and others who supported the hotly contested issue. However, passage of several pro-gambling initiatives in California drew a less-than-enthusiastic response from a lobbyist for moral issues.

With votes still being tabulated one day after the California primary election, Proposition 22 appeared certain of a huge victory, winning by a 3-to-2 margin. The Prop. 22 victory means California joins 30 other states and the federal government in denying recognition to same-sex marriages.

Larry Dotson, president of California Southern Baptist Convention, said he was "not at all surprised but very pleased" with the passage of Proposition 22.

"I felt the churches were very supportive of this proposition up and down the state, not only in our denomination but in many churches," said Dotson, pastor of Panama Baptist Church in Bakersfield.

"Obviously the people of California wanted to take a stand. You don't get that kind of strong statement just from churches alone," Dotson continued. "This was not a religious issue, it was a moral issue. And if 60 percent of California votes for something, then obviously several million (voters) that aren't Christians joined us."

The "defense of marriage" initiative had been at the center of an extensive advertising battle. The media campaign included bitter opposition from groups and individuals who claimed Prop. 22 was designed to discriminate against homosexuals. However, exit polls indicated voters in all age, income and racial groups supported Prop. 22, according to media reports.

Jan Williams, who helped organize a "Reclaiming California" conference last month at Immanuel Baptist Church in Highland, Calif., said she was "thrilled" with the outcome of Proposition 22.

"To me it reinforces the fact that if God's people are willing to take a stand, it comes out the way God wants it to," Williams told The California Southern Baptist newspaper.

Art Croney, executive director and lobbyist for the Committee on Moral Concerns, termed the Prop. 22 win a "tremendous victory." The Committee on Moral Concerns, a registered lobbying organization based in Sacramento and supported by California Southern Baptist Convention, was responsible for getting the pro-marriage initiative placed on the California primary election ballot.

"We suspected a landslide but it worked out better than we had hoped," Croney said March 8.

However, Croney expressed disappointment with the outcome of several other California ballot issues, notably three propositions dealing with gambling.

Voters approved Proposition 1-A, which permits Indian tribes to expand gambling on tribal land.

"It won big, which means California lost big," Croney said. "People want to help the Indians but they have no idea what they've done. Basically with that vote they've turned California into a Las Vegas-style casino gambling state."

Croney said passage of Prop. 1-A "trumped" another proposition that voters also approved. As a result, he said, Prop. 29, which affirmed previously established gambling compacts between California and a number of Native American tribes, become moot. But those tribes now stand to share in billions of dollars in gambling revenue expected to result from Prop. 1-A.

"It's a short-term benefit for the Indians, but in the long term it's another problem," Croney said. He noted that the California constitution provides that "a citizen or class of citizens may not be granted privileges

or immunities not granted on the same basis" to all other citizens. Croney predicted that it is just a matter of time before non-Indians figure out how to cash in on casino gambling in California.

"People are not aware of the harm that gambling causes. They're going to become graphically aware of it in the next 10 years," Croney said.

Proposition 17, which allows professional gambling organizations to run private raffles and lotteries in California, also won voter approval. Activities such as raffles and casino nights have been legally used by legitimate charities to raise funds in California for decades. Now, Croney said, legitimate charities "are going to suffer and it's an open door, an open invitation to phony charities and scams."

"It will be 10 years before voters realize what a mistake they've made" by approving Proposition 17, Croney said. "We're stuck with it -- it's a constitutional amendment. They'll try to fix it through legislation but they won't be able to."

-30-

## **Baptist Joint Committee installs Brent Walker in executive post**

By Kenny Byrd

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP) -- Supporters of the Baptist Joint Committee urged its new executive director to work tirelessly for religious freedom but not to shirk his responsibilities to his family and friends.

Brent Walker, 49, was installed as the BJC's fifth executive director at a March 5 gathering at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va.

Oliver Thomas, director of Knoxville (Tenn.) Legal Aid Society and former BJC general counsel, delivered a charge to Walker. Referring to the biblical prophet Elisha, Thomas told Walker, "burn your plough, barbecue your oxen, but hold onto your marriage, your family, your sanity and your life, cause ... it's a two-sided coin."

Thomas reminded Walker of the paradoxical two-sided coin that the BJC's previous director, James Dunn, often spoke about. "Law and grace, freedom and responsibility, no establishment and free exercise," Thomas said. "Tonight I have a coin for you," he told Walker.

"All it takes to be a successful executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee is all you've got," said Thomas. But "no destination -- not even the Baptist Joint Committee -- is so important that you can afford to not enjoy the trip."

Thomas said the wisest thing he did in his eight years at the BJC was hire Brent Walker as his associate. Walker became BJC associate general counsel in 1989 after graduating from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Previously he was a partner at a Tampa, Fla., law firm.

"I don't see lots of visions and I don't hear many voices, and so I don't say this about anyone," said Thomas. "But I believe that God has put his hands on Brent Walker -- at least the God I worship -- the God who loves people, all people -- not just my people or your people, but gay people, straight people, black people, white people, rich people, poor people, red, yellow black and white."

Nancy Walker, Brent's wife of 28 years, led the congregation in the installation prayer. She is minister to children at Columbia Baptist Church. Nancy and Brent have two children: Ryan, 20, and Layton, 17.

Reggie McDonough, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, called Walker "the kind of leader that would carry us forward to stand in the gap, in terms of freedom and liberty."

The crowd also received a visit from 18th century Baptist pioneer John Leland -- played by Fred Anderson, executive director of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society. Dressed in period costume, Anderson said that "religious liberty is a right inherent and not a favor granted."

The Leland figure also said he had told James Madison, father of the Constitution, to inform him if religious liberty should ever be threatened. The character said, "My voice has long been silent, ... but someone must be watching and waiting."

Speakers at the event said the BJC had been that watchdog for religious liberty.

Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas, offered words of encouragement to Walker but pointed to continuous threats to religious liberty in the present-day Congress.

Edwards said: "In the last year and a half, we have had a majority of the members of Congress first vote to obliterate the first 16 words of the Bill of Rights; second, voted to tear down the wall between church and state; third, voted to determine which religious document should be posted on public tax-supported schoolhouse doors; and fourth, the Congress voted to say its OK to send federal tax dollars directly to pervasively sectarian organizations."

Edwards, whose district encompasses Waco, Texas, told Walker that "James Madison and James Dunn -- after 200 years, have passed on a Bill of Rights completely intact. Your job is to keep it that way."

The BJC has been effective in its advocacy because of its reliable voice, said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. The BJC is a "treasure," Saperstein said, "not just for the Baptist community but for the Jewish community and for America."

In a symbolic gesture of passing the torch, Dunn, who directed the agency for 18 years, handed Walker a bow tie -- a regular piece of apparel for Dunn, who is now teaching at Wake Forest Divinity School and heading the BJC Endowment.

Walker addressed the audience and accepted the bow tie. He said education is the key to the future. "We must remind our adults and teach our children that soul freedom is universal; that religious liberty is indispensable; and that church-state separation is absolutely essential to protect the first two."

Walker said: "I look forward to the day when if someone says, 'God has been kicked out of the public school classroom,' people guffaw, because they know that God has a perfect-attendance record; ... to a day when if zoning officials try to ban house churches in residential neighborhoods, people will stand and say, 'If you can have Super Bowl parties and Tupperware parties and who-knows-what-else kind of parties, you can certainly worship God in this neighborhood.'"

Previous Baptist Joint Committee executive directors include: Joseph Martin Dawson (1946-1953); C. Emanuel Carlson (1954-1971); James E. Wood, Jr. (1972-1980); and James M. Dunn (1981-1999).

In a March 6 business session, the BJC Executive Committee raised the projected 2000 budget to \$918,200, a \$7,000 increase over the budget adopted by the agency's directors in October.

BJC Administrator Wanda Henry reported that receipts to the 1999 operating budget totaled \$839,073, compared with expenditures of \$864,859. Total receipts, including gifts to the endowment and income from special events, surpassed \$1 million.

Overseeing the BJC Endowment, Dunn told the panel that as of Jan. 6, the BJC had \$1.02 million in endowment funds.

The executive committee named three members of the BJC board to serve as an ad hoc advisory committee for the agency's endowment.

The executive committee also approved Dunn's proposal that the agency set a goal to increase its endowment to \$2 million by the end of 2000.

## Cooperation key to missions in next century, speakers say

By Marv Knox

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) -- A chaotically changing world calls for renewed cooperation in missions, speakers stressed during a missions conference at Hardin-Simmons University.

"Missions in the 21st Century" was the theme for the conference, sponsored by the university's Logsdon School of Theology Feb. 18.

The conference capped a weeklong focus on missions at the Baptist school in Abilene, Texas. Dedication of the Connally Missions Center Feb. 17 highlighted the emphasis.

The missions center is named for Virginia Boyd Connally of Abilene, a 1933 HSU alumnus, retired physician and university benefactor, and her husband, the late Ed Connally, a businessman and political leader.

The 21st century presents the greatest challenge for missions the church has ever known, insisted Bill O'Brien, recently retired director of Samford University's Global Center.

That challenge can be seen through the "dimensions of migration," he said.

To begin with, God is the "God of missio-migrants," faithful people who are on the move and on mission for God, O'Brien explained. For example, the story of salvation history begins with God telling the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, "Get up and go."

An almost-chaotic pattern of global movement or migration characterizes the world today, he said, citing a range of examples.

Political, environmental and economic refugees number in the multi-millions and shape national and international policy around the globe, he reported. Information will travel at the speed of light, and \$1.5 trillion changes hands daily, as "cybercurrency" is exchanged over the Internet. Because information equates into power, transnational corporations, not national governments, are the seats of power. Diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, ebola, hepatitis C and AIDS circle the globe. Technology, particularly biotechnology, presents humanity with ethical challenges much more rapidly than the church can respond.

With all these and other global challenges, "frustration is migrating like crazy," O'Brien added. Frustration crops up in tribalism and ethnicity, which produces ethnic cleansing, he said. Even the superpowers cannot deal with global terrorism. Fundamentalism is making an impact on all the major world religions. And persecution is rampant, with 160,000 Christians martyred last year alone.

Still, Christians are making progress in world missions and evangelism, he acknowledged.

"The church is bigger than you think," he said. "The most dynamic churches are in the Southern Hemisphere and the Eastern bloc."

And that means missions-minded Christians must team up if they're going to have a chance of sharing the gospel with the whole world. "The last frontier of missions is collaboration," he said. "Be open to new ways for new days."

But Christians must avoid the temptation to "recreate old methods that were not effective" to begin with, warned Keith Parks, recently retired coordinator of global missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and former longtime president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

"The face of missions is already in rapid transition," he said. The world's missions-minded Christians encountered the most recent shift in missions thinking and approach in 1966, Parks reported.

They "began to emphasize people, not nations" as a way to approach spreading the gospel around the world, he said, admitting, "Baptists were slow to recognize this."

The focus on reaching the ethno-linguistic people groups of the world recognized the global migration of people of similar racial/ethnic background and language, as well as the diminished legitimacy of national borders for defining people, he said.

A national approach to missions fails to recognize all the people groups within a particular nation and also fails to track the movement of people groups to other nations, he added.

The world now is home to about 13,000 distinct people groups, Parks said. Of those, 6,000 groups are comprised primarily of Christians. Another 3,000 groups represent a "missiological breakthrough," with people expressing receptiveness to the gospel. Still another 2,500 groups have very small indigenous churches, "with such a limited witness that there is limited human anticipation of spreading the gospel," he said. And the final 1,500 groups have absolutely no indigenous churches or missionaries serving among them.

Missions-minded Christians must support new and innovative methods for getting the gospel to people who have not had the opportunity to accept Christ as Savior, Parks urged.

Many Christians "would try to say: 'It really doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere. We're all on different paths to the same place,'" he lamented. "I don't believe that. Scriptures don't teach that.

"What we're engaged in is a spiritual battle. We've never really participated in intercessory prayer (for missions) and grappled with the notion of spiritual warfare. ... We must try to extend the kingdom of God the furthest, the fastest for God's glory, not ours."

That extension of God's kingdom is happening through collaboration among Christians "on the last frontier," the part of the world that has not yet been evangelized, said Kent Parks, Keith Parks' son and a missions strategy coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"We can't do the job by ourselves," Kent Parks conceded. "And we cannot fully know God from the perspectives of all the people groups of the world."

Collaborating mission organizations are weaving three main emphases to reach the unreached people groups, he added. They are "social justice, evangelical proclamation and a celebration of mysticism and belief in the power of prayer."

Most people unreached by the gospel are adherents of other faiths, and the key to communicating with them is "incarnational wisdom," said John Jonsson, professor of world religions at Baylor University and the son of Swedish Baptist missionaries to the Zulu people in South Africa.

"We should be less propositional and more human -- winning friends across cultures," Jonsson advised.

Propositional faith, which focuses almost exclusively on ideas and rational thought, tends to divide people and even subordinate people who hold different ideas, he said.

Incarnational wisdom, on the other hand, grows out of common humanity and relationships, he explained.

Jesus personified incarnational wisdom -- God became a human being, Jesus, who lived among and related to other human beings, he said.

"Incarnational wisdom is all about rubbing shoulders with these people," the non-believers of the world, he said. "And if we consider ourselves the royal citizens of the kingdom of God, then they need to be rubbing shoulders with us."

That challenge is "an unfinished task," insisted Dellanna O'Brien, recently retired executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, who spoke at a luncheon held in her honor.

"We must embrace the world," she said, particularly challenging members of Woman's Missionary Union. "Having seen the need, we cannot withdraw."

The challenge of spreading the gospel through the whole world is "an unfinished task," she declared. "Our future depends upon how willing we are to pick up the needs of the world."

## **'Humility' recurring theme at missions conference**

By Marv Knox

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) -- Humility has power to right wrongs, span cultures and shape hearts, according to speakers at a "Missions in the 21st Century" conference sponsored by Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology.

The speakers didn't set themselves up as models for humility. But Rob Sellers, organizer of the conference and the Connally professor of missions at the Baptist school in Abilene, Texas, noted the theme of power through humility that characterized their presentations.

An apology transformed a friendship with a Muslim businessman for John Jonsson, professor of world religions at Baylor University and formerly a pastor and professor in South Africa.

The Muslim businessman, a man of color without rights when apartheid gripped South Africa, faced economic devastation. Another businessman, a white Baptist deacon at a church where Jonsson had been pastor, arbitrarily doubled the Muslim man's cost of doing business.

When Jonsson heard about the wrong, he visited the Muslim man, a vendor with whom he traded and a person he considered a friend.

Jonsson entered the room and immediately dropped to his knees. He grabbed the Muslim man's feet and expressed his shock and deep sorrow at the wrong that had happened.

His Muslim friend lifted him up, and their friendship grew.

Soon, the man began to allow Jonsson to teach him about Jesus, at first studying all the passages where Jesus is mentioned in the Koran, the Islamic scriptures. Later, he asked Jonsson to teach him about Jesus from the Bible.

At the man's funeral, Jonsson told family and friends that this man, born and raised a Muslim, had come to "know Jesus better than most of the people of our church."

The simple act of calling someone by name provided the platform for a strong and loving relationship with a Muslim bus driver in the Middle East, reported Mark Long, a former U.S. military analyst and Middle East specialist.

During a bus tour of Syria, Long used his knowledge of the Arabic language and his love for Muslim souls to strike up a friendship with the driver of the bus. They talked about family and common interests, and Long called the man by name.

At the end of the week, when the tour ended and passengers got off the bus, the driver wept as he hugged Long goodbye.

"We should learn their language and tell them our names," Long said in a small-group session on relating to Muslims. "We as believers have a message that redeems lives," and it is best received when it is spoken in the person's native language and presented lovingly.

A.B. Short recalled being "made whole" during a night spent making sandwiches for prison inmates.

He told about growing up in Mississippi in the 1950s and '60s. "I lived in a society where injustice was alive and well, racism was alive and well, and the institutions -- family, church, the police and the legal system -- were silent," said Short, who helps operate church-based ministries to the homeless in Atlanta.

He particularly felt alienated when he tried to help a middle-class black man get medical attention at a Baptist hospital in New Orleans, which was "set up not to admit him," he said.

"I went through a period of being very angry at the institutions, at God," he recounted. "I tried to do social work without a faith base. I sought the 'American Dream.' But I couldn't replace my calling with material wealth and couldn't embrace the church."

He rediscovered redemption on a night when the Pearl River threatened to flood Jackson, Miss. He responded to a plea to help with sandbagging efforts and was dispatched to make sandwiches for prison inmates who were stacking sandbags on the levee.

In that effort, race did not matter, he said. Neither did degrees, wealth or social standing. God spoke to him through that night of hard labor alongside black and white workers who laid aside their differences to save their city, he reported.

He returned home exhausted, but changed. And through the effort, God renewed his commitment to minister through churches to express God's love to people.

The role of humility is a key to faithful mission work, Sellers observed. It places Christians in the role of a servant, a position adopted by Jesus, so they can credibly present the gospel to unbelievers.

-30-

## **'Target' a poor metaphor for witnessing, experts say**

By Marv Knox

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) -- Christians must use love, not symbolic targets, to lead people of other religions to faith in Christ, a couple of longtime missions leaders stressed.

Keith Parks is retired coordinator of global missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and former longtime president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Bill O'Brien is retired director of Samford University's Global Center and former longtime executive vice president of the FMB. The two discussed the concept of "targeting" other faith groups with the gospel at a recent missions conference in Abilene, Texas.

Southern Baptists recently received broad criticism for targeting -- or singling out for evangelistic efforts -- other faith groups, specifically Jews, Hindus and Muslims. Critics, especially Jews, have claimed the practice conveys overtones of hatred and threatens their security.

Criticism arose after the Southern Baptist International Mission Board issued pamphlets designed to guide Baptists in evangelizing other faith groups. Criticism also arose from a multi-faith ministers' group in Chicago, after the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board announced plans to blitz that city with the gospel this summer.

Mission board officials have defended the approach. It merely provides Christians with tools to share their faith with adherents of other religions, they said. And it is nothing new, since Christians have been proclaiming the gospel to people of other faiths since the first century, they added.

"We need a brand-new vocabulary in the 21st century," stressed O'Brien, who responded to an audience question about targeting at the "Missions in the 21st Century" conference sponsored by Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology.

"Words give shape to concepts," O'Brien added. "I've taken the word 'target' completely out of my vocabulary. It's a military word. If I target people, I don't have to know them. I've just got to get in range to fire the gospel at them."

"Focus" is a better word for the concept, Parks noted.

"At the CBF, we've been talking about focusing, not targeting," he explained. "It's more attitudinal. Targeting sounds like I've almost got to defeat you.

"But the gospel is not about forcing you, not about destroying you. It is valuing you, embracing you -- but still lovingly sharing the gospel relationally."

Humility is a key to evangelism, especially presenting the gospel to people of other faith groups, O'Brien added.

"It is very important to pray for people without Jesus," he said. "But I don't have to send a press release telling the world that's what I'm doing. I can humbly pray for them. I can minister with them, not to them. Targeting is not relational."

-30-

**END**

---