

# WESTERN RECORDER

VOL. 153, NO. 45, NOVEMBER 14, 1979

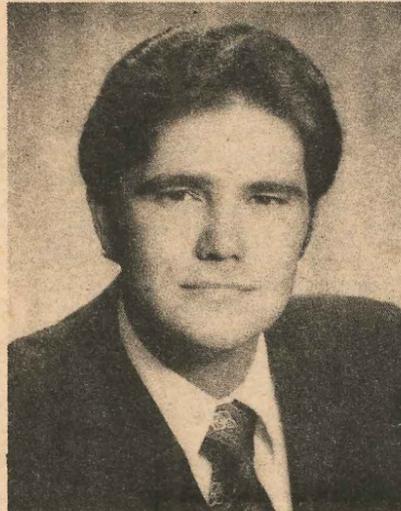
KENTUCKY BAPTIST NEWS JOURNAL



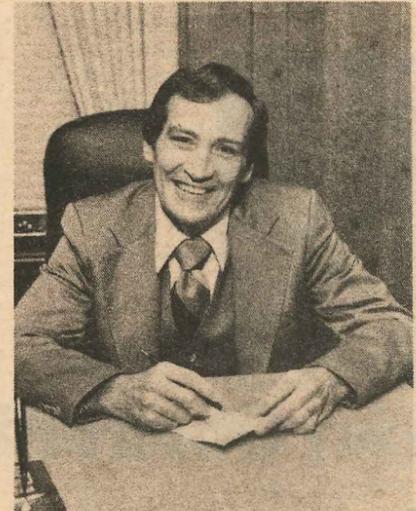
McCall



Criswell



Robison



Rogers

## Louisville Bible Conference: A balm for biblical inerrancy?

by Gail Rothwell, Staff Writer

In a chapel address Nov. 2 Duke McCall, president of Southern Seminary, spoke to the seminary community concerning the scheduled Heart of America Conference Nov. 5-7 at the seminary.

"Whatever else happens we are going to have a happening," he told the audience. "My prayer is that God's hand will be in the events. One cannot talk about peace overseas without incurring sacrifices and having peace within our own Christian community."

Sponsored by the James Robison Evangelistic Association, the conference was indeed a time of peacemaking for Southern Baptist leaders.

Since the national convention in June Southern Baptists have been bickering over the issue of biblical inerrancy. But the recurring theme throughout the conference was a call to forget semantic arguments and begin preaching the gospel to the world.

James Draper, pastor, First Baptist Church, Euless, Tex., expressed the thought when he stated, "We should not become bogged down in the authority of the word, but learn to live it." He continued by stating, "We have been doing the best we can, when the world needs the best God can do."

James Robison, evangelist from Hurst, Tex., presided over the conference. Robison, considered to be the most outspoken critic of seminaries and professors, declared, "We talk about what we believe in, but need to practice what we believe. We need to quit becoming reservoirs of truth and become rivers of life."

Referring to his message Robison jokingly told the audience, "Dr. McCall has the rest of the year to correct what I have said wrong."

In another message Robison asked God "to bless these professors and students . . . because they share Jesus with people."

Other key Baptist figures who addressed the overflowing chapel were Adrian Rogers, SBC president, and W. A. Criswell, pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas.

Criswell, a graduate of Southern Seminary, told seminary students present, "People will praise God that you came to school and sat at the feet of these gifted teachers."

During his Monday night message on sin in the lives of Christians Rogers stated, "Fault is within

when a person has a sour critical spirit. We should stop making alibis for sin, agree with God and he'll forgive our sin."

In response to the conference McCall stated he had not agreed with everything said, but added, "I really think we are having a happening. It is helping us. It has stirred some emotions we have not had stirred lately."

On Monday night the Long Run Associational 'M' Night and the Bible conference were united in fellowship at the Commonwealth Convention Center.

William L. Self, pastor, Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta, was key speaker. Answering the question "What direction should the people of God be going?" Self stated, "Our compasses need to be in the call of God, not in the whim of the people."

## Bible conference: a student's view

by Gail Rothwell, Staff Writer

I attended the first session of the recent Bible conference out of curiosity. In a special chapel address prior to the conference Dr. McCall asked students and faculty to find a point of agreement and build from there. He challenged the seminary community to reach out, hear and affirm the points of Christian faith that unite us.

The crowd at the Monday afternoon conference was small, but the quality of speakers and musicians was overwhelming. I found the entire conference to be inspirational and sometimes moving. The crowds, which increased greatly after Monday, were appreciative, handing out a few standing ovations to musicians and speakers.

I felt only one minor flaw, a thorn in the flesh so to speak, existed in the conference. I was at first offended by the abrasiveness of the evangelist presiding. My first reactions were ones of hostility and anger. But as I heard him speak my reaction became one of concern for I felt he reacted to situations out of a need in his life.

My peers and professors seemed pleased with the quality of the overall conference. It seemed unanimous the one presiding was the only one who really wasn't ready to join in a spirit of fellowship.

Some of the students suggested the only existing fault was a lack of time to dialog with speakers. I think students were surprised at how many points of agreement they were able to find.

I heard many comment they were glad to have had the conference on campus because it gave us an opportunity to hear and discern for ourselves.

As for the one presiding, what I heard expressed was not hostility or hate, but Christian concern and sadness.

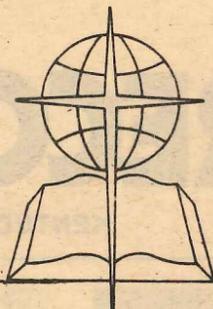
We were urged to take the high road of love, charity and fellowship—it is on this road I believe we met.



Americans celebrate Thanksgiving next week, a time of thanks for a bountiful harvest. But for much of the world the food basket remains empty. See related stories under Baptist News in Brief, page 3.

Earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. — Jude 3

**WESTERN RECORDER**  
(ISSN 0043-4132)  
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Published by Western Recorder Inc., Box 43401, Middletown, KY 40243 weekly, except for one week in July and December. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Western Recorder, Box 43401, Middletown, KY 40243.

Subscriptions: Single, \$4.20; foreign, \$4.25; church budget, \$3.00. Payable in advance, except church accounts, which require tax exemption number.

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C. R. Daley

## Daley Observations

### The heart of the Heart of America conference

The Heart of America Bible Conference in Louisville is now history and its outcome gives reason for gratitude to God. A meeting of this type could hardly have met in an atmosphere charged with more concern and anxiety. The wrong turn could have set off an explosion of tragic consequences and moved Southern Baptists toward a disastrous rift.

God is always to have the glory and the praise when his people come through victoriously but in this instance some humans also deserve to be thanked for demonstrating Christian character and love.

Southern Seminary president Duke McCall has been a tall man on many occasions but he never stood taller than when he opened his heart and the seminary chapel pulpit to men some of whom short months ago vilified him along with some of his faculty members.

Those invited almost without exception responded as great men of God and deserve commendation. They responded to love with love and the chapel at times was the scene of a true love feast. Most of the messages chosen as well as the spirit and manner of presentation were redemptive, conciliatory and healing.

President McCall called it a "happening" and that's what it really was. Something good happened to many of us. It reached this hard hearted editor and that's truly a happening.

The seminary students who came in large numbers surely must have been blessed. They heard the finest examples of Southern Baptist preaching which is reaching the masses today. It is true it was mostly one style of preaching which is not the only kind of great and effective Baptist preaching but it is valid. It is untelling what this happening will mean to the future ministries of hundreds of Southern students.

A loving spirit matching that of president McCall was that of W. A. Criswell, the greatly beloved pastor of Dallas. Criswell is the senior architect of the Heart of America conferences and the most influential advocate of the biblical inspiration view which challenges the view held by most Southern Baptist seminary professors. However, his account of what Southern Seminary teachers did for his preaching ministry was one of the most convincing tributes to Baptist seminary training ever heard.

The heart of Criswell is as big as the world and all of it is totally dedicated to preaching the gospel. It's also a heart of love for Southern Baptists and their welfare. It was Criswell who made the first move to heal the wounds resulting from the castigation of seminary professors

last June in Houston. He asked president McCall if the conference would be welcomed on the seminary campus and McCall extended the invitation.

But the actualizing of the affair was not that simple. Complications and schedule conflicts had to be worked out patiently. That this could be done was a victory in itself. Special credit is due Long Run Association leaders like Allen West and Harold Price who agreed to combine 'M' Night with one session of the conference. When it appeared the conference might be moved to another location in Louisville, local pastors including Bill Hancock and LaVerne Butler insisted it be kept on the seminary campus. This was admirable because it is highly doubtful if such a healing spirit could have happened in any other setting.

Only one speaker detracted from the sweet spirit of the conference and he tried later to make amends. Evangelist James Robison marred the Tuesday night session with some unnecessary and unbecoming remarks about seminary professors and he took the Tuesday morning session which had reached an amazing apex of spiritual fervor and changed it into a low level barrage of charges, criticisms and hostile challenges to seminary teachers. This gave critics of the seminary who were present their "Amen" opportunity but it was discounted by others who made allowance for uninformed zeal. Robison tried to make amends by insisting he loved everyone no matter how he sounded and he repeatedly asked for his hearers' prayers.

While we thank God for this outcome of a potentially harmful confrontation, our prayers and efforts are still much in order. What we now see is a truce, not a permanent peace treaty. Nobody's mind was changed by the conference though some hearts were joined. There is still a basic difference among Southern Baptists in how to arrive at the authority of the Bible. The hopeful and important thing is there is almost universal acceptance of the Bible's absolute authority and people of love and mutual respect can live and work together without agreeing on every detail.

The Bible conference speakers demonstrated in Louisville they are truly "big" in spirit and love and have no desire to be disruptive. God grant that they may demonstrate this wherever they go.

It behooves those of us who heard them and who labor together for the Lord in the seminary and in Kentucky to be as big and as loving.

### President Shelton retires again

Kentucky Baptist Convention president Hicks Shelton will retire again after his presidential duties this week. At least, that's his promise to his wife, Reba, who has seen less of him since his official retirement than before.

Even before becoming convention president Shelton was a busy man. He was a part time association director of missions who worked full time and spent considerable overtime in revivals. Lately he has served congregations as interim pastor and crisscrossed the state in revivals and denominational meetings.

He has been an active president missing very few meetings where he was supposed to be and making many others where he could help. He promised when elected to be at the beck and call of Kentucky Baptists and he has been.

History will recall many contributions of Hicks Shelton but to me Shelton will be remembered above all as a Baptist bridge builder. As such he has been one of the most valuable and effective influences ever to work for Kentucky Baptists. He is a product of a long and strong line of Kentucky Baptist preachers and pastors. He also served admirably as director of evangelism for the convention. He knows how the denomination looks in the eyes of pastors and also how it looks in the eyes of denominational leadership. Kentucky pastors including some who tend to be critical have confidence in Shelton. They know he will represent and deal fairly with their viewpoints.

He will preside over this week's convention sessions with patience and fairness. He can get rough, however, when he needs to and one would be foolish to push him too far.

President Shelton says he will be happy when the moment comes to pass the gavel to his successor but here's a prediction. The next time we hear from him Reba will still be trying to get him to retire.

# Baptist News in Brief



Junker

## MSC off and running?

It has taken more than two years to place 200 Mission Service Corps volunteers on the field at home but officials predict the next 100 will come by the end of the year.

The 200th volunteer was named in late October when Sam and Leslie Smith of Waco, Tex., arrived in Delta, British Columbia, Canada.

"It has taken more than two years to reach the milestone of the 200th volunteer, but the pace is now accelerating and we believe placing 100 more persons on fields of service by Jan. 1, 1980 is a reasonable goal," said David Bunch, coordinator of the Home Mission Board phase of the plan.

Mission Service Corps, adopted by messengers to the 1977 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Kansas City, Mo., is a plan to place 5000 volunteers alongside home and foreign missionaries for one or two-year terms.

Besides the 200 Home Mission Board volunteers, the Foreign Mission Board has approved 105 persons for MSC. Seventy of them currently serve in 22 countries.

## More suffer to serve

Lidia Vins, mother of recently released Soviet Baptist minister Georgi Vins, has reported the arrest of three more Baptists in the Soviet Union.

The new arrests, made Aug. 24, included youth evangelists Pavel Rytikov, Vladimir Rytikov (the elder Rytikov's 18-year-old son) and Galina Velchinskaya, 20, who were believed to have been leading a camp for children of Baptist prisoners.

Velchinskaya was reported to have been detained earlier this summer when police raided a Baptist children's camp in Belorussia, July 18, according to Bulletin 66 of the Council of Prisoner's Relatives.

Rytikov is the husband of Galina Rytikov, an active member of the Council of Prisoner's Relatives. Their eldest son, Pavel, who is serving in the military in Kazakhstan, was threatened with prosecution for witnessing to his faith in Christ.

## Hoosiers denied seats

Southwest Baptist Association voted by a better than 2 to 1 margin to deny the seating of messengers of two Southern Baptist churches in Evansville, Ind., at the association's annual meeting.

Messengers from North Park Baptist Church and Oak Hill Baptist Church, longtime members of the association, were denied seats because the two churches accepted members who have been baptized by "alien immersion"—baptism by immersion by a non-Southern Baptist church.

The "alien immersions," however, were performed by Baptists—General Baptists.

The association, one of 14 in the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, is believed to be the only association in the state convention which mentions alien immersion in its constitution as a bar to membership.

The action has the potential of affect-

ing the relationship of the two churches to the Indiana convention. One of the constitutional stipulations for seating of messengers at the state convention's annual meeting is that they be from churches "maintaining good standing in associations cooperating with the convention."

"Although an autonomous Baptist body can do what it wants to do, it is an extremely dangerous precedent in Southern Baptist life for state convention membership to be dictated by membership in an association," said Walter B. Shurden, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. "It represents a dangerous trend toward centralization of church government and loss of autonomy."

The pastors of both churches, Art Christmas at North Park and Roy Jones at Oak Hill, said they believe they are following the autonomy rule in their acceptance of General Baptist baptisms.

## Ex-BWA official passes

Rubens Lopes, former vice-president of the Baptist World Alliance and former president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, died in his office study Nov. 3. He was about 65.

Lopes, a pastor for 40 years at Vila Mariana Baptist Church in Sao Paulo, Brazil, was called "one of the strongest pastors in Brazil." He was president of the Brazilian convention on numerous occasions, vice president of the BWA from 1970-75 and president of the general coordinating committee of the Crusade of the Americas.

## Eat less, save more

"One less sweet potato—that would mean a whole lot."

So said Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board president John W. 'Jack' Patterson as he proposed that the board encourage "Southern Baptists to eat a modest Thanksgiving meal and give the rest to those in need."

Patterson's suggestion—which became a motion and received the board's backing—came on the heels of a Cambodian refugee report at the November board meeting in Richmond. The board allocated \$578,000 in relief to refugees fleeing to Thailand and Hong Kong.

"We need to call this to the attention of Southern Baptists," Patterson said. "Sometimes a suggestion is all that's needed."

## A "second holocaust?"

The Baptist World Alliance has asked its 115-member unions and conventions in 90 countries to contribute immediately to the relief of "a holocaust-by-starvation" that has already claimed almost half the population of Cambodia.

Cambodia, a nation of South East Asia, had a population of eight million before military turmoil moved into the country to destroy factories, schools, hospitals, machines, farm instruments and fishing materials. Only 20 percent of the usual rice crop could be planted this year.

Robert S. Denny, general secretary of the BWA, said the population has dropped to 4.7 million and that thousands of these are dying daily of malnutrition. He said a consultation of the Overseas Development Council, held in Washington Oct. 24, termed the tragedy a "second holocaust," comparable with the death of Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1940s.

John Cheyne of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board said Southern Baptists have long been at work supplying food and medical service to Cambodians in refugee camps in Thailand. This will continue as a regular part of Southern Baptists' mission outreach. Contributions for Cambodian refugee relief may be sent to the Foreign Mission Board, Box 6597, Richmond, VA 23230.

## 37 named by HMB

A corps of language specialists were among 37 persons approved for missions service by directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board during their November meeting.

In all, directors named seven missionaries and 10 missionary associates and granted 20 pastoral assistance. Ten of those will work among ethnic groups whose primary language is not English.

## \$500,000 aid package, black-white couple top HMB business agenda

In response to what was termed the "terrible suffering and very pathetic people of Cambodia," the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appropriated \$500,000 in hunger relief for refugee work in Thailand—the largest single relief allocation made in board history.

"Refugees look as if they should be dying," said Baker J. Cauthen, board executive director, at the Nov. 6 board meeting in Richmond. "How grateful we are to Southern Baptists that we are able to respond effectively with their gifts."

Another \$117,112 in hunger and general relief was appropriated for nine other projects—including one for children in Hong Kong refugee camps, another for ongoing refugee work near Chanthaburi, Thailand, and three related to hurricane-ravaged Dominica in the Caribbean. The November refugee relief brings the year's total to about \$800,000 for Indochinese refugee relief allocations through the board.

During an appointment service, the board named 23 new missionaries, including an interracial couple, Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Singleton, students at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo. The Singletons are the first black-white couple appointed.

The Singletons will serve in Dominica, where he will be a general evangelist and she will be a church and home worker. He is associate pastor and she is organist and education director of Forest Avenue Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo. She is employed as a faculty secretary at Midwestern Seminary.

The Singletons have been married 11 years and have two daughters, ages 10 and 7. "They have come to us

saying they have experienced a sense of call and are offering themselves in response to it," Cauthen said. "The excellent recommendations of those who have worked with them at Midwestern Seminary and in their church responsibilities, together with the expressed desire of the Dominica missionaries to have them join in the work there, give strong affirmation to the rightness of this couple for the place to which God is calling them."

R. Keith Parks, executive director-elect, expressed gratitude for the Singleton's missions commitment. "Their long-standing membership and service in Southern Baptist churches, along with their particular gifts, will enable them to make an excellent contribution in Dominica," he said.

## HMB post to Junker

C. William (Bill) Junker, a 22-year-veteran of student work at the Baptist Sunday School Board, has been elected director of the Department of Promotion at the Baptist Home Mission Board effective Feb. 1, 1980.

Before moving to Atlanta, Junker, 51, will have a major responsibility for the Student Conference on World Missions sponsored by the Sunday School Board and scheduled for Dec. 27-31 in Nashville.

As director of the promotion department Junker will have responsibility to lead a general promotional and marketing service for the board, including aiding in creating materials and resource data which will increase knowledge and awareness of the Home Mission Board among Southern Baptists.

## Gillespie resigns Campbellsville post

David Gillespie, business manager for Campbellsville College, has resigned his position with the college effective immediately. Health and the complication of factors related to it were cited as reasons for the change.

An Ohio native, Gillespie is an alumnus of Campbellsville. As student editor of the college year book, *The Maple Trail*, he was responsible for developing the symbol which became the official seal for Campbellsville College.

During his long tenure as college registrar, 1967 until 1977, Gillespie was recognized as a leader among his colleagues.

Pending appointment of a successor, academic dean Robert S. Clark has been named acting business manager for the college.

# Christian Education

## SBTS trustees increase staff

A New Testament professor, seven visiting professors and 43 instructors and adjunct professors were named to the teaching staff of Southern Seminary by the executive committee of the board of trustees in its quarterly meeting Oct. 25.

Roger L. Omanson, a Bible translator, was appointed for a three-year term as assistant professor of New Testament interpretation.

William Smith Jr., a Southern Baptist missionary, was elected visiting professor of Christian missions for the 1979-80 academic year.

Five appointments were made for the January 1980 term:

C. Penrose St. Amant, former dean of the School of Theology at Southern Seminary and retired president of the International Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, will be visiting professor of church history.

James F. Graves, pastor of First Baptist Church, St. Petersburg, Fla., will be the Warren P. Sewell visiting professor of pastoral studies. Also teaching pastoral studies will be Gene Tyre, pastor of Rainbow Park Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga.

C. David Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S. C., will be the J. Clyde Turner visiting professor of Christian preaching.

Mack K. Carter will be visiting professor of black church studies. He is pastor of Green Castle Baptist Church, Prospect, Ky.

Also named as a visiting professor, to teach psychology of religion during the spring semester 1980, was James David McNeely, a Louisville physician.

The following persons were elected to serve as instructors in the School of Theology for the current academic year: Charlie W. Boggan, Wayne Stacey and Jeffrey R. Sharp, New Testament; Paul Duke, Christian preaching; Greg Earwood, Joel F. Drinkard Jr. and Judith King, Old Testament; Jacque Culpepper, written communication; John Reed, Ronald E. King and Judith Lester, psychology of religion.

In the School of Religious Education, seven persons were elected to the teaching staff as instructors: Olivia Davis, youth and recreation; Joseph W. Hinkle, family life education; Wayne Todd, church library and media centers; Everett Robertson, church drama; Frank Hart Smith and John LaNoue, recreation; and Valerie J. Hardy, religious education of youth.

In the School of Church Music, the trustees appointed Eugene Sutherland, minister of music at Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, and C. Michael

Hawn, minister of music at Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville, as adjunct professors.

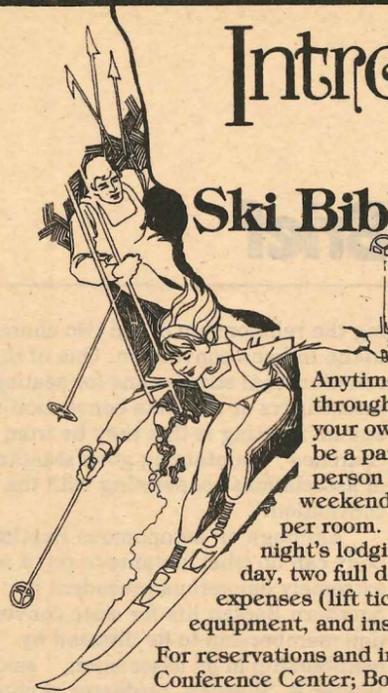
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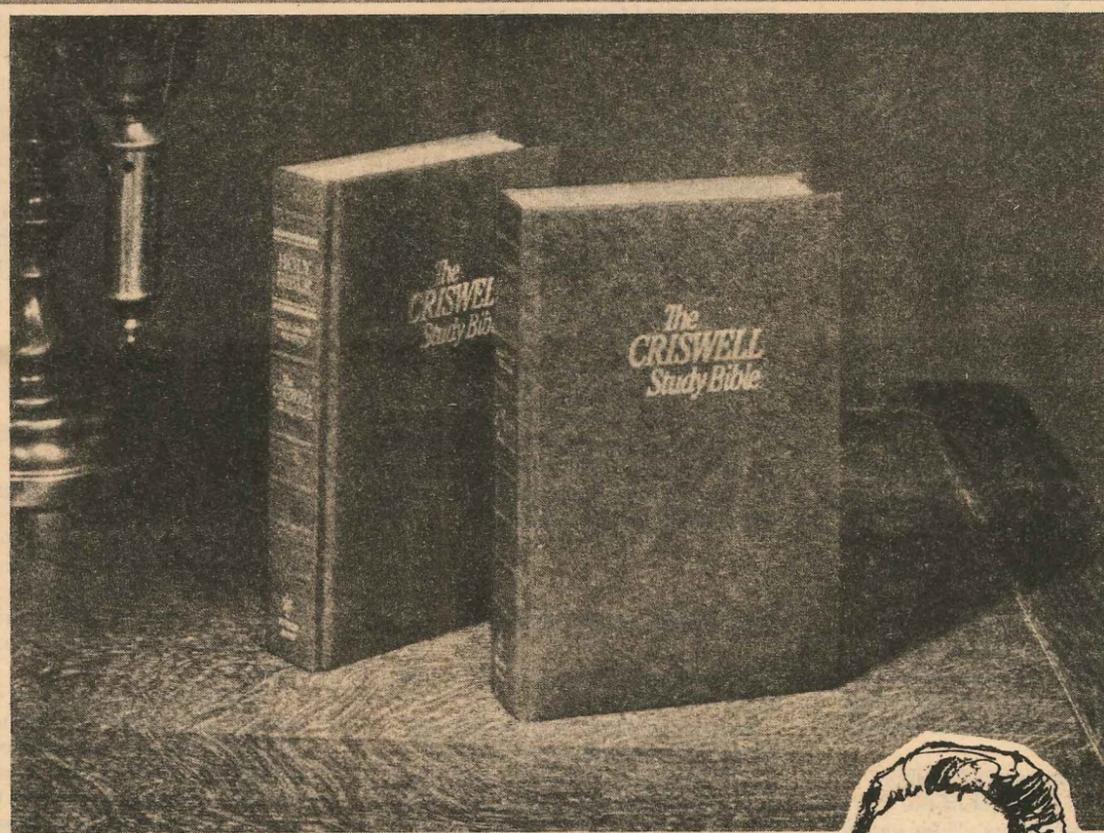


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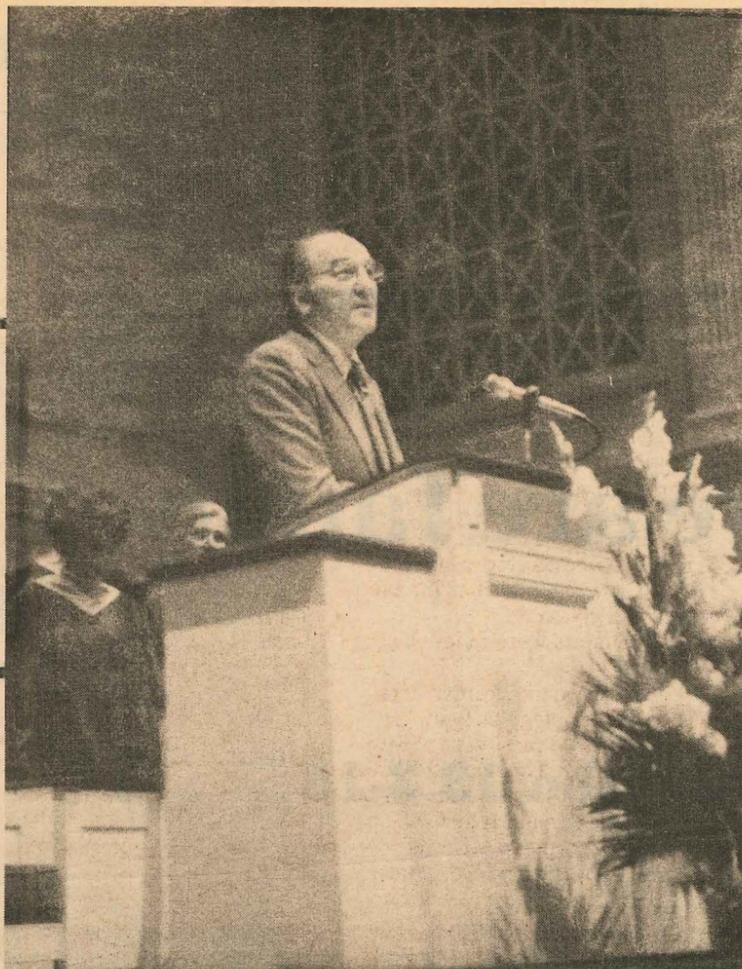
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## Matching resources to needs



T. Hicks Shelton

As far back as I can remember I was taught by my parents that missions is the primary job of both the Christian and the church. From boyhood memories I recall Matt. 28:18-20 as the "Great Commission." However, the impact of the word "great" did not hit me until many years later.

I was asked to speak at the annual meeting of Ten Mile Association on missions. When I arrived and received a program I noticed my subject read "The Great Commission." Immediately I said what makes it "great"? Here is the answer I found:

First, it is great because of the one who gave it—Jesus, the son of God, the saviour of sinners. He gives the commission to saved sinners. He makes it great.

Second, it is great because of the task assigned: go, disciple, baptize and teach. What a great task!

Third, it is great because of those to whom it is given: his people through his church. His church has many and varied ministries but every one of them must have as its ultimate goal the discipling of all men. This is the responsibility of God's people through his church.

Fourth, it is great because of the power by which it will be accomplished. This is not just a nice thought but a reality. God's commission to disciple the nations must be done by God's power through his people.

I'm sure most of you have agreed with me thus far. But now we must apply it to my life and yours; that's a little different. What is the significance of this great commission to Kentucky Baptists in 1979?

Have we accepted the fact the churches of Jesus Christ are the stewards of this gospel? Are we willing to accept the responsibility and implications of this commission?

We have a good program of world missions through the Cooperative Program. I must assume you agree with me. We must continue to enlarge and extend the Cooperative Program.

I'm talking to you about the surplus manpower and money that is in your church that could and should be used where there is need for it. We must go on and involve every child of God personally. Only when all of God's people fulfill their Christian calling can we meet the goals of the "Great Commission." You just can't hire enough people to do what Jesus has commissioned all of us to do together.

How can we do it? Kentucky Baptists have the people; Kentucky Baptists have the money. Kentucky Baptists have the needs. We must match our resources to our needs.

As Kentucky Baptists we have two general areas of need. We have the resources to meet these needs. I make no claims that it is easy but the commission has the power of God for its energy source.

The needs include help for our small churches and the establishment of new missions where we have no Baptist witness. We have the resources in abundance to meet these needs. That is already being proven. My time does not permit me to name the churches and associations that are putting these resources to work in Kentucky and surrounding states.

Bold Mission Thrust is in reality matching our resources with our needs. We can do it. We must do it. There is a need only you have the resource to meet. God knows where the need is and where the resource is. Listen! He is speaking to you. Speak boldly to your people. They will respond. Hundreds have responded when they were challenged.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention is made up of small churches. In fact, at least 50 percent have fewer than 200 resident members. These are found both in rural and urban sections. Due to the shifting population much of our leadership has gone to new locations, joining new and bigger churches.

I selected at random four associations and found the following. These four associations had a total of 80 churches. Thirty-eight churches had fewer than 100 resident members—47½%; 64 churches had fewer

than 200 resident members—80%; 18 churches had less than \$5000 total receipts—22½%; 34 churches had less than \$10,000 total receipts—42½%. If we required a church to contribute \$250 annually to the Cooperative Program before we seated their messengers we would automatically lose 600 or more churches, about one-third.

I am saying to you that the great commission includes the people in the communities where these small churches are and that our best missionary effort would be to enable these churches to function as New Testament churches. We have the resources to meet these needs.

Crabtree Avenue Baptist Church in Owensboro has proven it can be done. Brother Bob Durham took his young people to a little community out of Hyden where there was an inactive church, Confluence. They visited and held vacation Bible school. The second year the church reorganized with 28 members and baptized 12 people.

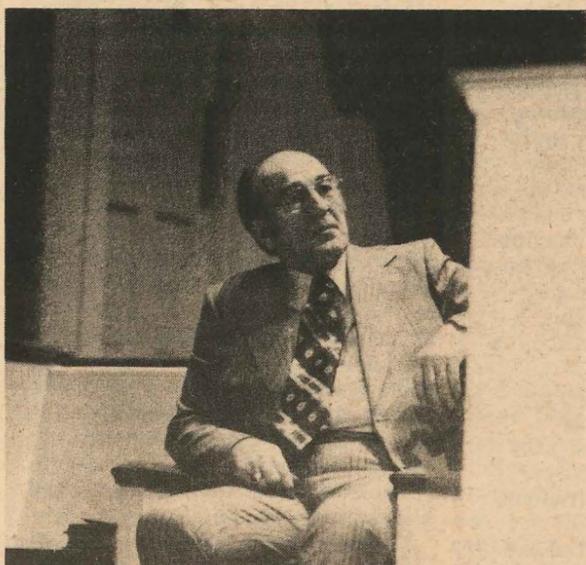
Henry Johns and the Versailles Church learned little Ivyton Church (32 members) needed a roof on their building. The men of both churches got together. Now Ivyton has a dry building and Versailles has a warm heart to do more.

The needs are many and varied but our resources are as many and varied. These needs are right at home. I believe there are from one to 10 churches in every association that need help of some kind. The church that helps the needy will receive more than those who received the help.

The second need is to establish preaching and teaching stations wherever there is no Baptist witness. I must confine my example to two. John Pate is the missionary in Pike County. Nearly 90,000 people live there. About 85 percent are related to no church. Brother Pate and his missions committee have located 13 places that need a Baptist mission. People, money, encouragement and prayers are needed. Surely some church or association could adopt one of these and work with a local church to establish a mission.

It can be done! The Sunday school leaders of Jenkins Baptist Church said we will go (12 miles) in the afternoon and teach. Brother Glenn Noe is pastor—he said to C. R. Daley, Bob Jones and me, "could you get us a van to be used in this mission"? We told the story. Allen Black and Muhlenberg Association bought the van. Now Darton Mission averages 40 in Sunday school.

You can find these great stories of matching resources to needs all over our state. We have started in a good way. I want you to have a part in it too.



Thomas Hicks Shelton, a native of Murray, is a graduate of Campbellsville College, Georgetown College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Shelton was a chaplain in the U. S. Army in World War II. He was pastor of First Baptist Church, Ludlow [1946-50], and Latonia Baptist Church [1950-65]. In 1965 he became secretary of evangelism for the Kentucky Baptist Convention where he served until his retirement in 1976. Shelton is now interim pastor of Southside Baptist Church, Princeton, Ky.

## Convention Sermon

# We are family

**Text: John 13:3-15**

by **Billy G. Hurt, Pastor,**  
**First Baptist Church, Frankfort**

Tucked inside the pad on my desk is a 3x5 card. The words on it, perhaps a bit too dramatic for some, are faded from years of personal use. Written on this creased, dog-eared and much consulted card are the words of Dr. Bruce W. Thielemann, dean of the chapel of Grove City (Pa.) College.

"There is no special honor in being called to the preaching ministry. There is only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors and, like the sea, it batters and bruises and does not rest.

"To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time, and to know each time you do it that you must do it again."

Never have these words appeared more true to me than today. But why should that be true for me, if at all, today . . . on this occasion? After all this is the time for "the Convention Sermon"—(The moderator of our church explaining this "honor" bestowed on their pastor referred to it as "something like the keynote address at a political convention")—by one chosen, for whatever reason, by a committee of his peers. Why should there be any hesitancy about preaching a sermon traditionally devoted to rousing affirmations of "those things which are most surely believed among us" (Lk. 1:1)?

Convention sermons are powerful instruments and have been known to define God, defy Satan, and even, on occasion, to deify the speaker and if not intended or thought to raise the dead, convention sermons have often been used to rejuvenate flagging programs, revitalize tired themes and have even been known to contribute new slogans to our denominational legalese.

My particular dilemma is created by numerous personal feelings and inner responses: my gratitude to you and to the committee who chose me for such a special honor; my feelings of loyalty to

Kentucky Baptists, Southern Baptists and our programs; my desire to identify with you and with your programs, activities and denominational meetings which bring us together and have, indeed, brought us together today; my personal commitment to Christ, imperfect though it be, is of vast importance to me and I wish to convey something of the importance of that commitment to you in what I say.

That "special pain" of preaching, so eloquently described by Thielemann, springs in part for me from the conviction that authentic preaching must be both Christ-centered and autobiographical and not just a recitation of biblical themes or theology. This sermon, any sermon, must not only be about him, it must also be about us for our preaching about God is authenticated in and through our personal pilgrimages. I do not consider it inappropriate then to express some of my personal feelings which contribute to my very own personal preaching pain on this occasion. My credentials seem somewhat lacking for such an occasion as this for I cannot validate my presence here with impressive statistics of "what God had been doing for us in our church," nor can I speak as one whose intimacy with the divine will has made him, if not an expert, at least a loudly zealous proclaimer of "right answers" to everything from God's specific answer to the moral ills of society to unhesitating announcements of how, when and where the Millennium will begin.

My pilgrimage has confirmed that ancient wisdom that sin is deadly (and incidentally more than seven!) but that virtue may be even more deadly for the deadliest sins are often those born of the noblest motives. I wish that I could with the fervor born of personal experience declare to you the freedom and joy of one who has learned how to consistently deny self and unrelentingly, unhesitatingly seek always first the kingdom of God.

But alas, like the ancient Pharisees, I have learned that the right hand often

seems strangely unmotivated unless the left hand not only knows what it's doing but carefully and conspicuously broadcasts it and that prayer without an agreeably witnessing audience seems strangely unfocused and that the preacher's greatest temptation is not to remember and respond to Satan's allurements but to forget and reject our Lord's indication that eternity's greatest blessings are reserved for those who minister incognito. And do I find among you some . . . or even one . . . with whom I could share solace in the common confession that while our stronger selves affirm that God's laws are indeed chiseled in stone, our weaker selves would, at times, live as though they had only been scribbled in sand?

But now I grow bold in the assumption that, whatever it has been or may on other occasions be, it will be appropriate for a convention sermon to be about conventions. May we move in that direction now, by recalling our scripture reading. Neither our imaginations nor the meaning of words will be stretched out of shape if we consider that long ago, upper room meeting, a convention. It was a "CONVENIRE," a "coming together."

Announced, planned for, it too required some of the planning and carrying out of detail so necessary for any convention. A place was chosen (although considerably more at random than we could tolerate today), an agenda was planned and expected and persons were present. That ancient, upper room convention of long ago also faced a hidden agenda.

While Jesus and the disciples would obviously be together for the purpose of observing the Passover, there were other, more private, personal and controversial issues which were not out in the open. There was an undercurrent of concern among the disciples which Jesus had, on occasion, witnessed as to who would be greatest in his kingdom. James and John were particularly interested in having Jesus define for them

what they could expect in terms of their own personal position in his kingdom. The issue had been intensified by the attempts of their mother to intervene on their behalf and some of the disciples were indignant over this blatant display of desire for prominence.

Peter voiced his concern about the rewards and security associated with Jesus' kingdom when he asked "Lord, what do you have to give to those who have left everything to follow you" (Mk. 10:28)? So undercurrents, fears, tensions, suspicions and various feelings of indignation were present in that ancient upper room meeting.

Unknown to these quarreling, tense disciples, Jesus quietly prepared them for that soon-to-be-time when he would no longer be the catalyst producing the group's fellowships. He prepared this quarreling, tense, suspicious group of men for a mission to a world lost in quarreling, tension and suspicion.

Anyone aware of the hidden conflict within that long ago group of disciples could justifiably ask: "How can this group ever rise above its parochial and sectarian concerns to concern for worlds beyond self and position?" Jesus gave an answer to that question and to those disciples when he took a basin of water and a towel and began to wash their feet. In this act Jesus gave no specific answer to those tensions and conflicts which characterized that ancient convention and which often characterized his people today.

I cannot help but think that they must have found this frustrating. We find it frustrating when people will not give us the specifics with regard to solving problems or defining issues. We need to keep in mind, however, that at least in matters of religion this tendency towards specifics produced its most splendid fruit in the ancient Pharisee.

What Jesus did long ago focuses our attention on the importance which he placed on proper attitudes as the basis for our service. Faced with the disciples' specific concerns about their futures, their relationships and their



personal position and security, Jesus performed an act which said in essence, "The basic issue to be dealt with in this gathering concerns our attitude toward one another."

Today we Southern Baptists like those disciples in that ancient meeting place have discovered and put voice to our tensions and our concerns. It does not appear that the concerns of today are novel and unique to our generation. But zeal has a way of imagining itself to be always the first born and first generation champion of its cause.

Generally, issues which we Southern Baptists and Kentucky Baptists face today have been debated through the decades. Our debates today are new only in the sense that they have taken on new personalities and are embodied in new champions and in a particular contemporary setting. I do not think it would be an overstatement to say that there is abroad among Southern Baptists today what I shall call for want of a better term a "mean spirit." There is a spirit among us creating suspicion, hostility, distrust. That mean spirit like that ancient hidden agenda touches us with regard to our concerns for our personal and denominational security and position.

There are those who have hinted at certain specific solutions to our denomination's tensions. In fact, certain solutions have been more than suggested, they have been shouted. We have recently come through a meeting of our convention in which it was alleged that overt political activity and all of the processes implied in that terminology were used to the intent that one group's answer to Southern Baptist problems be imposed upon all; this past convention saw charges and counter charges made in the name of Jesus Christ; voting irregularities were alleged in the selection of certain officers of our convention.

The registration secretary of our convention was instructed to make an investigation into the possibility that there had been widespread abuse in the

registration procedures and that some were enroled as messengers only because they had lied or used duplicity in identifying themselves.

We Kentucky Baptists have not been unaffected by these pressures and tensions. It would seem to me that, historically, Kentucky Baptists have been characterized by their freedom in discussion and debate. However, it also appears that this debate and discussion most often has centered around the operation of our agencies. Differing viewpoints as to how we should conduct our affairs have always produced lively sessions for Kentucky Baptists.

But it seems that this convention finds us facing an issue which is basically theological in nature. As such this issue we face today tends not to allow us the freedom to debate and share in differing viewpoints. For some the logic of theology would allow no debate, no differing viewpoint, no individual flexibility. What is the answer when the theological LINES are drawn? The issue of biblical infallibility hangs unanswered and yet threatening over the heads of Southern Baptists everywhere.

There are those who say the way to solve the problem is to enforce a particular view upon the denomination even with the likelihood that there could be literally hundreds of thousands of Southern Baptists who have heretofore considered themselves loyal to the Baptist genius expelled from our denomination. There have been those who have suggested that the way to deal with the issue is simply to forget it. Forget it for sake of engaging in other more necessary, fruitful and proper activities. There are those who say the way to solve the problem is to redefine the terms.

So we engage in doubtful semantics and dubious historical reconstruction in order to come up with agreeable terminology such as "original manuscripts." There are those who say that the way to solve this problem is to debate it. But debate is seldom the exchange of ideas.

It is more often the expression of rigid and inflexible positions. Debate, rather than settling issues, more often draws lines. And, when the debate is over, the old attitudes and positions remain, if changed at all, more certain, more fixed in concrete than before.

It would seem to me that in light of the needs of Kentucky Baptists, our institutions and our people, that we would do well to remember Jesus' example in that ancient upper room convention. He gave no specific answers to the issues that perplexed his followers. He did, however, give them the solution. He made sure they would perceive the truth of what he did. "Do you know what I have done for you? . . . I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:12b,15).

An "example!" In the midst of tension and conflict, Jesus gave them (and us!) a pattern to follow. The words may encourage us, challenge us, frighten us and produce chagrin in us, but they cannot be avoided or ignored for he gave no qualifying statements, no conditions, no exceptions; "You also should do as I have done to you." Has Jesus not shown by that long ago example, that within the Christian community the issue of fellowship takes precedence over all other issues, even theological ones?

As I come to the end of this statement (I hesitate to call it a sermon!) I willingly acknowledge that I have broken no new ground, introduced no new and scintillating insights, birthed no new theological statements. I make no claim for profundity except as my words may give evidence of a profound grasp of the obvious. But I do believe my words to be Christian and this exhortation to express Christ's solution to our denomination's ills. We ignore Christ's words and example to our peril for his words are as much for us as for Simon Peter: "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me . . . of you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:8b,17).

I had hoped to deal with the issue of our fellowship in a wider and more specific way. But I leave that further treatment to someone else lest you should say to me what was said to the preacher who admitted that he had preached too long—"Oh, no. It wasn't too long; it just seemed long."

Remember the letter to the church in Ephesus, Rev. 2:1-7? The church was commended for her work, toil and patient endurance. Following his words of commendation our Lord said: "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4). What does this accusation mean, ". . . you have abandoned the love you had at first"?

I believe William Barclay's exposition of this passage to be not only correct but moving and challenging. Barclay wrote: ". . . what this means is that the first fine rapture of Christian fellowship and love for the brotherhood is gone. In the first days the members of the church at Ephesus had really loved each other; they had been a band of brothers; dissension had never reared its head; the heart was ready to kindle and the hand was ready to help.

But something had gone wrong. It may well be that heresy-hunting killed love; it may well be that the eagerness to root out all mistaken men had ended in a sour and rigid orthodoxy. It may be that orthodoxy had been achieved, but at the price of fellowship. When that happens, orthodoxy has cost too much.

May God help us to avoid that zeal for Christian truth which may obliterate the truth that matters, that God is love and that we are inseparably bound together in him, our Father, and that the purity which is not peaceable cannot be equated with either Christ's demand or his example.

I am quite amazed at how much mileage the secular world gets out of Christian concepts. Long before Willie Star-gell and the Pittsburgh Pirates were saying it and experiencing its unifying power, Jesus had said it with a towel and a basin of water: "We are family."

# Mountains to the Mississippi



**John Farmer (l), present pastor, and R. R. Couey, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Carrollton, recalled pleasant experiences with the congregation. The occasion was the recent celebration of the 130th anniversary of the church and the 30th anniversary of Farmer's ministry in Kentucky and Georgia churches. Couey, retired and living in Winchester, spoke at the afternoon service following a church dinner. Western Recorder editor C. R. Daley was speaker in the morning service.**

## Congregations

**FBC Barbourville celebrates 175th** First Baptist Church, Barbourville, will celebrate 175 years of service during the month of November.

There will be visits and sermons from previous pastors, presentation of an historical pageant, a reunion luncheon of persons who attended Barbourville Baptist Institute and a jubilee reception.

Living former pastors include H. C. Chiles (1933-48), Fred T. Tarpley (1948-50), J. Carroll Chapman (1950-53), J. Frank Hixson (1954-57) and Jesse Hatfield (1957-63). The present pastor is Marian Andrew Reese.

**Hillvue Heights concludes TWB** Hillvue Heights Baptist Church, Bowling Green, subscribed over \$212,000 through cash gifts and three year pledges during a 13 week Together We Build campaign.

The church received \$157,032 in total offerings for all causes last year. The first month of Together We Build the total receipts exceeded \$25,000.

The campaign was directed by J. Victor Brown, consultant with the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission. Bobby Simpson, a layman, was campaign director. Gary Watkins is pastor.

**Nuclear weapons resolution adopted** Henry County Baptists adopted a resolution on the threat of the nuclear arms race in their annual meeting Oct. 12-14. The resolution called reliance upon nuclear weapons a grave threat to world peace and pointed out the alarming possibility of destroying all human life as well as the entirety of God's creation by nuclear holocaust. The resolution also expressed support of national leaders in their efforts to seek mutual agreements with other nations to slow the nuclear arms race. Gene Roberts, pastor of Smithfield Baptist Church, was chairman of the Henry County resolutions committee.

## Revivals

**Hickory Grove staff leads revival** The staff of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Independence, recently led the

church in revival. Pastor Colburn Hooten was evangelist, associate pastor Jimmy Morrison led the music and minister of music Charles Wilson played the piano. There were 25 decisions made during the revival.

**46 decisions at Gethsemane** Gethsemane Baptist Church, Louisville, recently completed revival services. There were 46 decisions, 18 were additions. Chester Irvin is pastor.

**58 decisions at Mt. Moriah** Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, Nelson Association, recently completed a revival. Pastor B. Ted Richardson reports 17 professions of faith, one addition by letter and 40 public commitments. D. E. Jones was evangelist.

**Two professions at Barnett's Creek** Barnett's Creek Baptist Church, Ohio County Association, recently completed revival services. There were two professions of faith and many rededications. Jimmie D. Wheeler was evangelist. Rex Payton is pastor.

## Personnel

**Chambers to Russellville Second** Second Baptist Church, Russellville, Bethel Association, has called Melvin Chambers as music director. Chambers has been music director at Whipoorwill and New Friendship Baptist churches. He is a native of Auburn.

**Taylor resigns Liberty** Lee Taylor has resigned as pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Sulphur Fork Association, to accept Riverview Baptist Church in Nelson Association.

**Jones resigns Pleasant Grove** James D. Jones has resigned as pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Little Bethel Association.

**Two enter ministry at Cave Spring** Cave Spring Baptist Church, Logan Association, recently had two surrender to the ministry: Don Davenport and Billy Joe Hopkins.

**Crumpton resigns Fairview** Ray Crumpton has resigned as pastor of Fairview Baptist Church, Greenup As-

sociation, to accept the pastorate of Farrington Baptist Church, Houston, Tex.

**Staff resigns at Parkland** Parkland Baptist Church, Louisville, is making staff changes. Pastor Don Zuberer resigned Oct. 28 to accept the pastorate of Yellow Creek Baptist Church, Owensboro. Mike Harris resigned as assistant to the pastor to go to Calvary Baptist Church, Ft. Wayne, Ind. Byron Ball resigned as minister of music to accept a similar position at Lake Carroll Baptist Church, Tampa, Fla. Mrs. Helen B. Smith has resigned as director of preschool and children.

The church recently called Robert Karolyi as minister of administration and education. Karolyi comes to Parkland from East Dayton Baptist Church, Dayton, O. He follows Danny Bridges who resigned as minister of education this past summer.

**Maynard to FBC, Mt. Sterling** Gary Maynard has begun at First Baptist Church, Mt. Sterling, as minister of music and youth. Maynard moved to Mt. Sterling from First Baptist Church, Pikeville, where he was minister of music and education.

**Martin makes Tennessee move** Dan Martin, minister of bus evangelism at Radnor Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., has resigned to become pastor of Wrigley Baptist Church, Dickson, Tenn.

Before going to Radnor Martin was associated with evangelism at Ninth & O Baptist Church, Louisville.

**Holt leaves South Fariston** Dean Holt has moved from the pastorate of South Fariston Baptist Church, Laurel River Association, to Woodbine Baptist Church, Mt. Zion Association.

**Thompson resigns Everman** Medley Thompson has resigned as pastor of Everman Baptist Church, Greenup Association. He is available for interim and supply work.

**Fletcher to New Hope** Henry C. Fletcher of Charleston, W. Va. has been called to the pastorate of New Hope Baptist Church, Greenup Association.

**Gibson to Paint Hill** Ed W. Gibson is new pastor at Paint Hill Baptist Church, Lynn Camp Association.

## Ordinations

**Slaughters ordains two** Slaughters Baptist Church, Little Bethel Association, recently ordained Wallace Duncan and Jimmy Goff as deacons.

**Ball ordained at Madisonville First** Russell Ball Jr. was recently ordained as deacon by First Baptist Church, Madisonville, Little Bethel Association.

**Community ordains Davenport** Community Baptist Church, Bethel and Logan Association, recently ordained Paul Davenport as deacon. Morris Lee, Davenport's former pastor at Woodlawn, Tenn., preached the ordination sermon.

**Two ordained at Liberty** Monroe Slaton and Charles Fuller were ordained as deacons by Liberty Baptist Church, Little Bethel Association.

**Crowder ordained at Robards** Dorris G. Crowder was ordained to the ministry Oct. 28 by Robards Baptist Church, Green Valley Association. Crowder is pastor of Sparta Baptist Church, Owen County Association.

## Deaths

**Robert F. Travis dies** Robert F. Travis, 48, a former Kentucky Baptist minister, recently died in Kinston, N. C. after a struggle of eight years with cancer.

Travis was a native of Durham, N. C. and a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Before returning to a pastorate in North Carolina he was pastor of Woodland Baptist Church, Morgantown, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church near Owensboro and Bethlehem Baptist Church, Bremen.

Travis and his wife served three years as Southern Baptist missionaries in Kenya. He is survived by his wife, two sons and one daughter. Family members may be addressed at Route 8, Box 315, Kinston, NC.



**Kentucky Foreign Mission Board member Mrs. Ray Mullendore and Foreign Mission Board executive secretary Baker J. Cauthen greet one another with Louisville's Highview Baptist pastor, Bill Hancock, looking on. The occasion was the dedication service of the congregation and the new facilities of the Highview church. Mrs. Mullendore, along with active and retired Southern Baptist foreign missionaries in Kentucky and Kentucky Baptist leaders, were guests of Highview and pastor Hancock for the special day.**

## The Cooperative Program speaks

*Missions calls for a plan. Baptists have a plan called the Cooperative Program. Let it speak for itself:*

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Dollars from the working people of great America.

I come from drug stores and filling stations.

I come from factories and mines.

I come from stocks and bonds and money saved.

I come from retirement income.

I am dedicated money.

I belong to God and I am a part of the great hope for his will being done on earth.

By the time I come together I am \$165 million.

Yes, I am money, sacred money given freely by free people to the world's most sacred cause.

But I am more than money.

I am PEOPLE.

I am over 2000 state missionaries seeking to build a church on every hill of our homeland. I am working summer and winter to strengthen the cause of Jesus Christ in every home and every community.

I am 6148 teachers in 71 colleges and seminaries endeavoring by God's help to make our nation a Christian nation. I am nearly 3000 foreign missionaries carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth.

I pray in Japan and Africa. I work from early morning to late evening in Arabia and Italy.

I am nearly 3000 home missionaries who witness to the Indians, the Spanish, the Negro and other minorities in our own country.

I am a lonely missionary keeping watch by a sick Navajo 100 miles from a doctor.

Yes, I am people. I am the countless thousands won to Christ, the frustrated men given new hope, the tired weeping women given new songs, the fast growing children given new life, all because of a new knowledge of Christ, all because of your gifts and love.

Also, I am WORK.

Hard work, laboring for years unnoticed and without results. I am a long journey into the wilderness to find a lonely Eskimo family that needs Jesus.

I am a teacher teaching one day after another, week in and week out, helping young people learn the power of the scripture in original Greek and ancient Hebrew.

I am an evangelist preaching night and day, month in and month out, away from home, never ceasing in my appeal to lost humanity.

I am a lonely doctor in a foreign land standing beside an operating table until I could fall to the floor, ministering to the impoverished and sick millions.

I am a quiet unknown woman who waits in the night beside the beds of 20 little orphan children while they say their prayers and to tell me their troubles.

Who criticize me criticizes dedicated hearts.

Who blaspheme me blasphemes one of the Holy Spirit's way of doing missions.

Who transgresses me transgresses the sacred moment when a great people called Baptists touches lost, broken, undone humanity.

But this is not all, who robs me robs God.

The Cooperative Program is YOU.

It is you poured out through what you give to the world.

It is not how much you give that counts but how well you give.

It is how much you give in proportion to what you can give.

If you give all you can, your partnership with God is mighty.

If you give with a tight mean fist, your partnership is a denial. You have disappointed God's confidence in you as a builder of his kingdom.

I am you at work trying to save the world before it is wrecked by the spiritual blindness of the nations.

Yes, I am you, your voice, endeavoring to show the world is not controlled by blind force by spiritual power. The world does have a purpose and moral order.

I am your glorious song shouting, "All hail the power of Jesus name."

Yes, I am you at work everywhere and all the time to prove he shall reign.

I am Southern Baptists' greatest expression of conquest and unity.

I am the Cooperative Program.



## Mother's prayer takes on new meaning

A mother's prayer learned as a child assumed grown-up meaning for James Franks of Richmond, Va., when the Southern Baptist minister received the heart of a 21-year-old New York man killed in an auto accident.

"The prayer of 'now I lay me down to sleep' became the most comforting and meaningful prayer I ever heard during the ordeal leading to the transplant and during the surgery itself," the 52-year-old minister recalls.

Besides his mother's prayer, Franks also had medical coverage through the Southern Baptist Annuity Board on his side during the months before the eight hour transplant operation on Dec. 14, 1978.

Over an 11 month period, Franks' policy paid more than \$104,000 to "keep me alive."

The large medical expenses resulted from the complicated surgery and treatments administered to Franks while he went through 11 cardiac arrests.

At one time the former pastor of Staples Mill Road Baptist Church, Richmond, was declared clinically dead for three minutes.

"I don't remember anything about dying," says Franks. "I didn't have one of those tunnel experiences you hear about."

Tunnel experience or not, Franks feels he benefited from his brush with death.

One thing the experience taught him was a deeper appreciation for insurance protection offered to ministers and church employes through the Annuity Board.

"I was fortunate in that the churches I have served always kept me in the Annuity Board's protection program. If it had not been for this coverage, I would have gone bankrupt."

Today Franks is no longer able to preach full time.

Still he finds time for travel and making brief speeches.

Sometimes he talks about the transplant operation . . . and his mother's prayer.



James Franks

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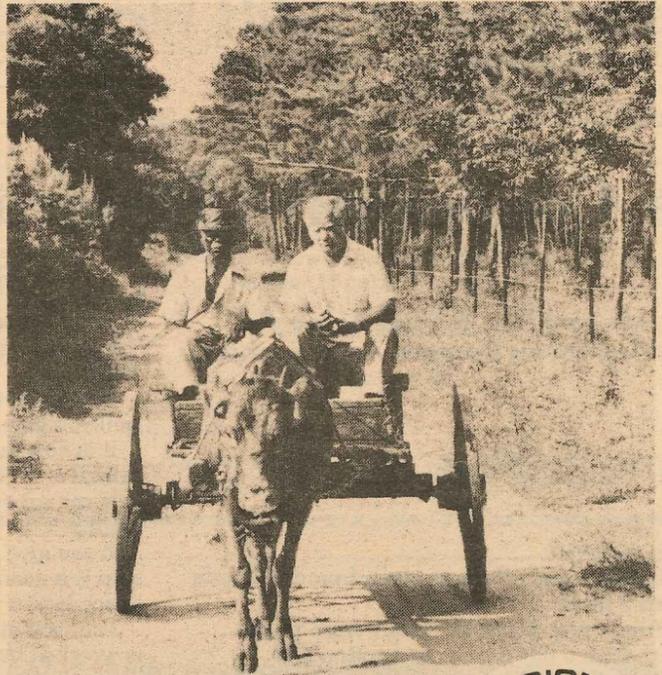
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## LIFE AND WORK SERIES

## A vicious cycle

**Judges 2:10-17** The Israelites continued in a vicious circle by sinning, being subjected to punishment, repenting, being forgiven and then following the same course again.

**Their defection—Judges 2:10-13** Following the death of Joshua and the elders associated with him, the Israelites turned to the worship of Baal, male god of power and violence, and Ashtaroth, female goddess of fruitfulness and corruption.

**Their distress—Judges 2:14-15** When the Israelites turned away from God and worshiped idols and plunged into the depths of immorality, it became necessary for God to deal with his people in their waywardness in such a way as to bring them to repentance and a turning from their wicked ways. As a means of administering discipline for correction, "he delivered them into the hands of spoilers." Their deliverance into the hands of their enemies was a definite and inevitable judgment of God.

**Their deliverance—Judges 2:16-17** God punished the Israelites for breaking the covenant which they had made with him and for their rebellion against and disobedience to him. He did not forsake them. Their inveterate wanderings away from God were exceeded only by his mercy as demonstrated in his delivering and restoring them. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). God repeatedly manifested his grace toward them by forgiving them and giving them another opportunity to make good. When the Israelites turned back to God in penitence, the judges were used of him to deliver them from the subjugation and punishment which they had brought upon themselves by their sinful ways. As soon as the Israelites turned to God in contrition and repented of their sins, they received from him deliverance, protection and assistance.

## INTERNATIONAL SERIES **The new community and evil forces**

**Ephesians 6:10-20** The Holy Spirit commands us to "be strong in the Lord." Human strength alone will never be able to overcome the world and Satan. Sufficient strength for victory over these foes can come only from the Lord.

God's people need to be equipped with the proper armor for protection from their foes. Our heavenly father has the exact armor which his children need for their protection.

This armor, which is the same for all Christians, is ready for use. To refuse to wear it will spell defeat for any Christian, whereas, to use it will mean victory.

### I. Part of this armor is defensive.

A girdle was a strong belt holding the ordinary Oriental attire in place. A child of God should be encased in the truth and have his life regulated by it. In Paul's day men fought with sharp swords, long spears and dangerous darts. The breastplate of steel was a most important part of a warrior's armor. Far more essential than the breastplate of steel is the righteousness of God.

If a soldier is to endure the long marches over rough ground, he must be well shod. If a believer in Christ is to journey over the rough roads through the wilderness of this world, his feet must be shod with the gospel of peace.

When a knight donned his armor and started into the battle, he held in front of him a shield to protect his body from darts. If a Christian is to withstand the darts of Satan, he must have as his shield a strong faith in God and his Word. The helmet is for the head, the seat of intelligence. The assurance of salvation is a wonderful protection for the mind. Both the salvation and the assurance of it come from the Lord.

### II. Part of this armor is offensive.

The sword is a great weapon for conquering. The Word of God is to be used offensively in putting the enemy to flight. There is grave danger the Christian will be so occupied with the defensive armor he will neglect the use of this valuable offensive weapon, the sword of the Spirit.

Prayer is vital to right living and effective Christian service. The hosts of wickedness are delighted when they can keep Christians from using the spear of prayer. We are dependent upon God for guidance and strength. We cannot do God's will effectively or his work successfully without earnest prayer for endowment from him.

## Valid witness

I appreciate good advice. I need it. I pray often for wisdom. There are times when a great deal of responsibility seems to hang around my neck and I must make important decisions that are subject to strong criticism. No complaint. Just a fact of life.

I even appreciate well intended poor advice from the person who doesn't know enough of the background to have as accurate an opinion as he thinks he has. He may just be the very person on some other occasion to give the advice I need.

I was thinking, though, of an occasion in which an advisor seemed to know what I ought to do, based on a piece of information gleaned from another source. I didn't rush out and do what I was impressed to do. I decided to hunt down the third party whose report had prompted the counsel.

I came away greatly doubting the validity of the witness who had given the report. I had no other evidence to go on. I had just seen and observed a great deal that made me doubt the motivation of the witness and thus to doubt his testimony.

Years have come and gone now and my prayerful conclusion that I should ignore

DECEMBER 2, 1979

## INTERNATIONAL SERIES

## Christ preeminent in all things

**Colossians 1:9-20** Upon receiving from Epaphras a full report of the Lord's work in Colosse, Paul wrote the Christians there, whom he had never seen, and assured them of his genuine interest in them and earnest prayers for them. He expressed his gratitude for their faith in Christ. Paul prayed they might be filled with knowledge of God's will. Paul prayed the Christians at Colosse might walk in a worthy manner, be strengthened of the Lord to such an extent their lives would be pleasing to Christ. He was anxious for them to overcome their temptations, to grow in grace and knowledge and to be fruitful in good works.

In verses 12 to 14 Paul mentioned three things Christians should be thankful for: The portion which they have inherited, the power which they have been delivered and the price at which they have been redeemed. God sent his Son to redeem us from our sins, and the price which Christ paid for our redemption was his own precious blood poured out on Calvary's cross.

Paul's assertion about the preeminence of Christ fills us with an overwhelming sense of the majesty and glory of our saviour. Describing him as the "firstborn," he let us know Christ is entitled to the position of rank, dignity and supremacy.

Christ is above all in creation. Out of nothing Christ created all that is (John 1:3). In Christ alone all things find their orderly arrangement and cohere or hold together. Christ is preeminent in redemption. "Christ died for our sins." For him there is no substitute, nor will he ever have a successor. So far as redemption is concerned Christ is man's only hope.

Christ is preeminent in the church. Because he is the mighty source of its life, the bond of its fellowship, and the one for whom it bears witness, he must given his rightful place in all its activities. He desires and deserves the preeminence in our lives.

## LIFE AND WORK SERIES

## Judgment and hope

**II Chronicles 36:15-23** Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, appointed Zedekiah as ruler of Judah, which became a vassal state of Babylon. When Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon 10 years later, Nebuchadnezzar resolved to subdue him and his people. Zedekiah's sons were executed in his sight, his eyes were put out and he was imprisoned in Babylon until his death.

Zedekiah's kingdom fell because he had permitted the temple to become a center of idol worship. God had sent his prophets to warn the king and the people that, if they should fail to forsake their worship of idols, the divine wrath would come upon them. Each time God sent his messengers to warn the people of Judah, they mocked and abused them. Zedekiah refused to heed the message from God. He decided to heed the counsel of the false prophets and the warmongers. The people imprisoned the messengers of God and refused to believe disaster was near.

When it became obvious there was not any possibility of bringing them to repentance God sent the fires of divine judgment upon the city of Jerusalem in the form of sword, famine and pestilence. None were spared. All perished by the sword or were taken captive to Babylon, both king and people.

All of the sacred vessels which had previously been taken from the house of God were removed to Babylon and presented to the king for his own use. Soldiers burned the house of God, demolished the walls of the city, burned the palaces and left the city in desolation. Only a few were left to care for the vineyards and crops. God used the Babylonians to scatter his people and give them an opportunity to witness elsewhere for him.

The Persians conquered Babylon in 586 B.C. King Cyrus issued a proclamation, which was recorded, that those who had been conquered might return to their homeland within the empire if they so desired and requested the privilege of doing so. Only a remnant of them took advantage of the opportunity and returned to the homeland.

## Frank Owen

the matter until and unless there was more to go on has been rather fully confirmed. I'm glad I did not "act in haste and repent at leisure." My philosophy also has been a bit further confirmed; namely, when in doubt, don't.

The point of all this vagueness is not in the story itself, but in what it illustrates. I decided not to believe or act upon what was told me because I doubted the veracity of the witness.

Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses . . ." (Acts 1:8)

Southern Baptists continue, nobly, to address themselves to the avowed intention to proclaim the gospel to the whole world by the year 2000. We are thus trying to fulfill the command to be his witnesses. The purpose of our witness is that they might believe and act upon our report that he is the son of God and saviour. Naturally, whether they believe and act will depend a whole lot on whether they believe in us, the witnesses.

## Stuntman finds Christ after accident

Some Christians might have difficulty thanking God for a knock on the head resulting in an operation and a month in the hospital.

Not George Wilbur.

A Hollywood stuntman, Wilbur sustained a fractured skull, concussion and blood clot on the brain in March 1974 when an explosive charge went off near his head.

Before the accident Wilbur said he had been searching for something to give meaning to his life. But he had not responded when a friend who was a new Christian had witnessed to him.

In the hospital Wilbur said he had been confident he would recover even though doctors said there was only a 50-50 chance he would survive the operation to remove the blood clot.

He awoke following the surgery on Easter Sunday morning, Apr. 12, 1974 at 7:05 a.m. His first words were "Thank you, Jesus."

"I was resurrected that day. I thank the Lord for the hit on the head he gave me," Wilbur said.

Wilbur shares his conversion experience and his life since 1974 on a fall segment of "At Home with the Bible," a weekly television and radio program produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and the Radio and Television Commission.

Before the accident Wilbur said he "was basically a good guy, a homebody." So becoming a Christian did



Hollywood stuntman George Wilbur said it took a knock on the head to make him realize Jesus Christ should be first in his life.

not change his lifestyle as much as it changed his priorities.

After the Lord his second priority is wife Gaynell and their two children. His church comes third. Also, Wilbur said his Christian faith has made him a more compassionate person.

"I've been a comfort to some people in the picture business," said Wilbur, citing one example of a friend whose child drowned.

He said he believes it is God's will he be a part of the motion picture industry. "In this business people have big egos but the Lord wants to say to people, 'put me on the throne.' I pray each day that he'll lead me to someone to share his love."

As a stuntman with more than 100 movies and tele-

vision performances to his credit Wilbur has developed skills in high falls, horse falls, fencing, boxing, karate, stair falls and scaling cliffs by rope. Often the stunts are highly dangerous.

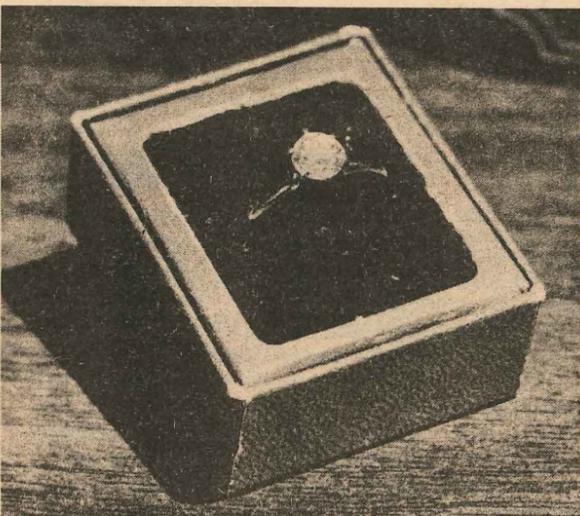
"I create an image of a stunt in my mind. I work it out step by step. Then I walk through it. What's created in my mind works 95 percent of the time," he explained.

Besides family, church and his stuntman's career, Wilbur gives boxing lessons to children. He reports life more fulfilling than ever before.

"It wasn't this way before the accident," he stated. "I hope it doesn't take a hit on the head for others to realize the love of Jesus."

## Diamonds 'friendly' to seminary couple

by Teresa Sanders



Diamonds can be a seminary couple's best friend.

At least they are for Logan and Mary Elizabeth Carlisle of Georgia. She recently won a diamond ring up to \$1000 in value by correctly guessing the number of karats in a bracelet displayed at a Louisville area shopping mall.

The two are at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he is a third year theology student and she teaches two-year-olds at the school's child care center.

According to Carlisle, when they entered the contest they calculated the number of karats at 46 and then decided that was "too many."

"Mary Elizabeth cut the total down to 42 and I didn't think it would be an even number. So we cut it down to 42½," he said.

That total hit the karat right on target.

When the store notified them by phone Mrs. Carlisle had won; she was at work and her husband took the call. He and his mother-in-law who was visiting decided to keep the contest results a secret until they could take Mrs. Carlisle to the store to collect her prize.

Later that day they went to the store and asked if the winner had been selected. The store clerk told

them yes. Carlisle asked who won.

After the clerk told them the last name, Carlisle asked, "Was that Mary Carlisle?"

She replied it was.

After the winner had recovered moderately from the shock, she spent two hours trying on different rings before deciding upon a choice.

Mrs. Carlisle is the former Mary Elizabeth Cagle of Marietta, Ga. Her husband, from Griffin, Ga., is minister of youth and associate pastor at Ridgewood Baptist Church, Louisville.

He agrees diamonds are a girl's best friend. But he thinks an addition should be made to that saying.

"Free diamonds are a boy's best friend," he says with a smile.