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-- FEATURES

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Frail Bodies, Staring Eyes--
And Baptists Seeking To Help

By Martha Skelton

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand (BP)--An old teakettle or pot, a mat, a rolled-up blanket--evidence that a Cambodian refugee family has staked claim to this piece of ground. Then the blanket moves, a bony arm comes up and an emaciated head emerges. That "roll" is a person.

Thousands of Cambodian men, women and children are clustered in makeshift refugee camps along the Thailand border. Many are too sick or too weak to go on. They live in improvised lean-tos made from whatever they can find--twigs, a piece of plastic, a blanket.

They sleep on the ground or on mats, usually with minimal cover. Because the daytime heat can be unrelenting, shelter by blanket, tree or bush is sought. But the evenings in Thailand are cool and increasing numbers of refugees are developing respiratory infections. Shade grows nearby; heaters and sweaters don't.

There is an orderliness to the refugee camp. Disruption takes energy. Each morning when medical teams, such as one from Baptist Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, arrive, the less ill are lined up quietly at the "in-patient" tent to receive a checkup and medication. The more seriously ill are taken to the "hospital" area--a section set aside under some trees away from the living areas.

Many times family members stay with ill relatives. Doctors can't always tell which person is the patient. Hunger has given almost all the refugees frail bodies and dazed, staring eyes that do not follow movement or express emotion.

Yet even in these conditions there are touches of tenderness. A big sister helps a little one sit up for a drink of water. Litter bearers gently lower a critically ill man onto a mat in the "hospital" area. A mother brings her baby in and holds it as its eyes flare in fear of the stranger who is trying to help.

Doctors and nurses circulate quietly and as quickly as possible, talking through translators to the Cambodians, examining patients, dispensing medicine, hanging an intravenous feeding from a tree limb.

Simple communication is difficult for an English-speaking doctor. He asks a question in English to a Thai-speaking aide, who asks an aide who understands Thai and speaks Cambodian, who in turn asks the patient. Answers take just as long.

Food--rice with a fish sauce--is prepared in large quantities. The people do not eat as you would expect the starving to--quickly, in great quantities.

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"They don't so much eat like they're starving as they eat like they've forgotten how," observes Southern Baptist missionary Jerry Hobbs, an evangelist working out of Bangkla Hospital who served as interpreter and aide for the hospital's emergency medical team working in the camp.

Some of the refugees seek to supplement their rations. Near the housing camp is a small, murky pool and children squeeze the ooze through their fingers looking for fish to eat.

Because battle-torn Cambodia has not had a regular food crop since 1975, the small children have known nothing but deprivation. They sit quietly in camp, sometimes assisting parents with chores such as fetching water. Their size belies their age; a child that looks a skinny age seven may actually be in his early teens.

In the temporary camps the hills of Cambodia are just a few miles away and often the sounds of war rumble in the distance; over the coughing, occasional conversation and a weak baby cry. The Thai government now has moved most of the refugees away from the border into more permanent "holding camps." But while they were near the border, the tension of the situation could be seen on their faces, felt in the air. When artillery fire penetrated border camps in recent weeks, all refugees who could muster any strength fled in fright. They know the horrors of war.

For these people, being a refugee means not being able to stand your country any longer and having no other countries ready to stand you. It is eating others' food, drinking others' water, living in areas totally determined, changed or closed by others.

Strength is sitting up, walking. Malnutrition emaciates the adults, stunts the children, bloats the babies. Resources are wood and shrub twigs on the refuse piles around the edges of the camps, discarded materials, leftover clothing and cover sent from the plenty of other countries.

For some the refugee camp will be a beginning; for some it is the end. Bodies daily are wrapped in a blanket, tied to a pole, and taken out for burial by litter bearers.

For Southern Baptists and many others who are trying to help, these refugees have become a living symbol of the people Christ called "the least of these."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

Board's Bible Publishing
Firm Moved to Nashville

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The A.J. Holman Company, a Bible publishing company purchased by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board May 1, 1979, will move to Nashville from Philadelphia, effective Nov. 1.

The total inventory of the Holman Company was shipped to Nashville in May, according to James W. Clark, executive vice president of the Sunday School Board.

"The move of the Holman Company to Nashville is a logical one," Clark said, "since many of the Holman functions already are being performed here."

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In addition to the inventory, all new production ordered since May 1 has been shipped directly to the Sunday School Board's warehouse and orders from dealers have been received and processed in Nashville since early May. Accounts receivable also are already maintained at the board.

Clark said the move "will shorten the lines of communication, centralize necessary records, improve decision making and speed up customer service."

"Key personnel who have served Holman will remain with the Sunday School Board following the move to Nashville," Clark explained.

"C.E. Andrew, president of the A.J. Holman Company, will remain in Philadelphia until at least Dec. 31 to complete work on two major Holman publishing projects in the Philadelphia area."

Andrew and two sales persons will join the board. Eight clerical personnel from Holman's original staff of 11 persons have elected to seek employment in the Philadelphia area, a board spokesman said.

Records, plates, negatives, files, contracts and any other paperwork related to the business, plus a collection of old Bibles, are involved in the move on Nov. 1.

Clark added that as current contracts expire, Holman book publishing will be assumed by Broadman Press, making the Holman Company solely responsible for Bible publishing at the Sunday School Board.

The A.J. Holman Company, the oldest American Bible publisher, was acquired May 1, 1979 by the Sunday School Board from the Philadelphia-based division of the J. B. Lippincott Co., for \$2.3 million.

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Lay Leaders Accept
Prediction, Challenge

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
10/30/79

TOCCOA, Ga. (BP)--Lay leaders from throughout the Southern Baptist Convention welcomed a prediction and accepted a challenge during the seventh annual National Renewal Evangelism Conference.

"The '80s will be known as the 'decade of the laity,'" said James Smith, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission. "Out of a spirit of renewal, there will develop great volunteerism. God will use spirit-filled laity" in the coming years, he explained.

His message was amplified by Ralph Neighbour, pastor, author and urban evangelism strategist from Houston, Texas. He urged renewal leaders to "get to the heart of New Testament evangelism" by adopting lifestyles of servanthood.

"Smith's prediction and Neighbour's challenge, as well as the response they generated, validated the direction lay renewal has taken in the past several years," said Reid Hardin, director of renewal for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which joined with the Brotherhood Commission to sponsor the meeting.

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"We've reached a watershed, and the (renewal) movement is turning outward," he added. "Laymen are saying, 'We're ready to go now.' They can accept a call to action just as well as missionaries and pastors."

Smith stressed that the laity should not be mobilized exclusively for humanitarian causes. "Our role is to minister to men--to lead them to Christ," he said.

"That's right," Hardin added. "For years, laymen have been set aside as activists to participate only in the physical aspects of ministry. But the laity that have been involved in renewal have journeyed inward. They have discovered a spiritual maturity that will enable them to stretch outward and effectively minister to those around them."

"This conference was characterized by a deep, quiet mood as people evaluated the cost of commitment that will be necessary to evangelize this nation and the world," he said.

Much of the evaluation followed lectures in which Neighbour shared his concept of TOUCH (Transforming Others Under Christ's Hand) ministry.

"I believe God is up to something in this generation," he told participants. "But we have to become aware of the millions of Americans who have no church orientation, from the earliest childhood until they reach adulthood."

"The Christian community must be led to recognize that the most powerful form of evangelism in the New Testament centers on serving unbelievers," he added. "Jesus emphasized the servant lifestyle and illustrated what that means by his own existence."

"When a man is not yet receptive to the message of salvation, we can earn the right to give him that message by serving him and allowing him to observe our radically different lifestyles."

Neighbour challenged Southern Baptist laity to learn to wash feet, clothe the naked, feed the hungry... (and) help the poor, who will not hear the gospel until it flattens them with its impact."

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Effort Launched
To Fire Georgia Editor

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--Efforts will be made at the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting Nov. 12-14 in Savannah to fire Georgia Baptist editor Jack Harwell and possibly other convention employees alleged to hold "liberal" views of the Bible.

Another possibility includes efforts to change established procedures for electing the next executive secretary of the convention's executive committee when the incumbent, Searcy S. Garrison, retires.

The Christian Index, edited by Harwell, said the efforts are spearheaded "by a group of ultra-conservative Georgia Baptists concerned about the alleged 'liberal drift' in the convention."

In another action, the Dodge County Baptist Association, comprised of 38 churches, voted 75 to 22 in its annual meeting that the Georgia Baptist executive committee "dismiss the editor of the Christian Index because of his lack of faith in the entire Bible as the infallible word of God and that this be presented as a motion at our Savannah convention..."

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In another action, the association voted 73 to 19 that the convention vote in November "to remove any employee of the Georgia Baptist Convention who denies the Bible is the infallible, inerrant word of God."

At least two other associations, Merritt Association and Atlanta Association, have voted support of Harwell, as has the Atlanta Baptist Pastors' Conference, according to a Christian Index spokesman.

William A. Powell of Buchanan, Ga., editor of The Southern Baptist Journal, who has led efforts over the years against Harwell, told Baptist Press that letters have been mailed throughout the state criticizing Harwell's views on the Bible. The criticism is based on a personal letter Harwell wrote about five years ago.

Powell said also that churches are being urged to elect their full quota of messengers and that he is polling some 500 Georgia Baptist churches on his mailing list to see how their messengers would vote on Harwell. He denied he was encouraging messengers to be instructed how to vote.

The Index reported that strategy has been mapped in at least three meetings, each attended by about 40 pastors and laymen, to bring motions to the convention floor.

Doyal Conley, pastor of Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, and chairman of the group at the most recent meeting which took place in Macon, told the Index: "Listed as the most important issue was the need for an editor of The Christian Index who has atheology that is in harmony with traditional Baptist beliefs, one that will not promote apocryphal editions of the Bible and one that will use The Index to promote and encourage evangelistic efforts across Georgia to promote Bold Mission Thrust, and not allow it to be just a social report on Baptist life."

Conley also said in a prepared news release: "The next issue of importance was the desire to see the Georgia Baptist Convention select a search committee for the next executive secretary after Searcy S. Garrison's retirement, and that the convention itself employ the next chief executive."

The statement added: "Many expressions of approval and gratitude for the job Garrison has been and is doing were made, and the desire for a convention-appointed search committee does not in any way reflect on the record of the current executive secretary. It is a desire to see the decision placed into the hands of the entire convention, rather than a handful of people."

Garrison has not announced any retirement plans. He will be 67 years of age in November. In March, the convention executive committee asked him to remain on the job until age 70. He has not responded to that request.