

**BAPTIST PRESS**

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April 24, 1969

COTA Telecasts Prompt
Big Viewer Response

ATLANTA (BP)--Cards and letters were in at a 100 a day three weeks after the nationwide Crusade of The Americas telecasts sponsored by Southern Baptists.

The three telecasts, featuring Evangelist Billy Graham and News Commentator Paul Harvey, offered free material to anyone who would write to a special crusade box number in Atlanta.

Toward the end of April, the volume of mail from all over the nation went over 2500 and included nearly \$1,300 in donations, despite the fact no financial appeal was made.

Some of the letters were critical of the "modern" format of the shows, others contained obvious cries for help, but most were simple in content and commendatory in tone, asking for the free materials.

In response, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's division of evangelism here is sending a packet of materials that includes several tracts, a registration blank for a correspondence Bible course, transcripts of Harvey or Graham as requested and a booklet called "Good News By a Man Named John," which is the Gospel of John in Today's English Version.

Some of the letters--such as one from a young homosexual--were appeals for help with spiritual doubts and personal problems.

"We are answering these letters and cards personally," said Jack Stanton of the SBC Home Mission Board.

Many of the correspondents easily matched the crusade tract-for-tract, enclosing information and materials about a variety of causes, from opposition to sex education in schools to denouncements of the Supreme Court to support for fundamentalist religious endeavors.

Many of the letters were addressed to Billy Graham or to Paul Harvey. One was addressed to Graham-Harvey in care of the Young American Crusade. Still another opened with: "Dear Jesus Christ:..."

One woman wrote: "Billy Graham is as near to the second coming of Christ as I shall live to see."

Most of the letters were straight down the middle, however, commending the basic evangelistic message of the telecasts and the generally patriotic themes of youth, the home, the nation.

One letter read: "It is so good to know there are left some people who have not swept God out with the trash."

Another letter expressed distaste for the use of folk music and popular music sounds, stating that Baptists "commit suicide when they depart from the usual arrangements of the usual hymns in favor of some highfalutin songs."

Others hailed the lack of an "institutional approach." In fact one complimentary letter expressed disappointment at the closing invitation of the telecasts being in a simulated church setting.

One young writer from Detroit expressed concern for Graham's health, wondering if his informal, sit-down chat during the telecasts was "because your health is not good."

Stanton, who was coordinator for the film productions, said: "We are pleased with the response and we are anticipating even more after the scheduled telecasts early in May."

Pitt Named To SBC
Stewardship Post

NASHVILLE (BP)--William H. Pitt Sr., stewardship secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention for the past nine years, has been named director of the endowment and capital giving service of the Southern Baptist Convention Stewardship Commission.

Pitt, a native of Memphis, will move from the state-wide office here to the national stewardship office on James Robertson Parkway effective in mid-May, according to Stewardship Commission Executive Director Merrill D. Moore, who made the announcement.

He will be responsible for church and institutional fund raising by the Stewardship Commission on request from Baptist churches and institutions in cooperation with state conventions.

Before joining the Tennessee Baptist Convention staff in 1960, Pitt was associational missionary for the Gibson Baptist Association in Northwestern Tennessee for five years, and pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Louisville. Previously he was pastor of two Memphis churches.

Ordained to the ministry in 1950, Pitt earlier worked with Colonial Bakery in Memphis, and coffee companies in Memphis and New Orleans.

He is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and Union University, Jackson, Tenn.

He was an elected member of the SBC Stewardship Commission from 1961 to 1968, and is listed in Who's Who in the South and Southwest.

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Historical Commission Studies
Negro History, Writing History

(4-24-69)

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention elected a new chairman, approved of a supplementary volume of the Southern Baptist Encyclopedia, and heard lectures on how to write Baptist history and the significance of Negro Baptist history during its annual meeting here.

Elected chairman of the commission was W. Morgan Patterson, associate professor of church history at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, succeeding Fred C. Schatz of Belmont College, Nashville.

In major business action, the commission approved of publication, hopefully by 1971, of a supplementary third volume of the Southern Baptist Encyclopedia, covering Baptist history from the period 1958-1970 since the first two volumes of the encyclopedia were released.

Major speakers for the three-day meeting of the commission, including joint sessions with the Southern Baptist Historical Society, an auxiliary to the commission, were Barrington R. White of Oxford University, Oxford, England; and E. A. Freeman, pastor of First Baptist Church (Negro) in Kansas City, Kan.

Freeman was invited to speak on "Negro Baptist History" at the request of the commission's administrative committee in response to adoption by the Southern Baptist Convention last June of a "Statement Concerning the Crisis In Our Nation."

Freeman traced Negro and Negro Baptist history in America from the 17th century to the present, concluding with three "indispensable steps" which white and black Christians "must take to break down these walls which divide us."

The white man must demythologize the Negro and refute beliefs among whites that the Negro is inferior, that the Negro was condemned by God to be servants and slaves, that Negroes are inferior because they are descendents of slaves, that Negroes are primitive people with low morals, that Negroes are lazy and shiftless, and that Negroes were happy until stirred up by "Northern troublemakers and Communists."

The white man must also try to understand both the good and bad implications of black power, Freeman said. He also must try to understand the Negro's ambitions and goals in America's pluralistic society.

"The Negro is seeking entrance into the mainstream of the American economy and he will not rest nor let others rest until he gets there," Freeman declared. "Total integration is our goal, so we are pleading now, but our plea is backed up by an indomitable will to tell our white brothers to please move over, we are on our way. Then all of us together shall make and keep America strong and productive."

Freeman said that white Christians need not worry about current pleas among black leaders for separatism. Departing from his prepared text, Freeman said Negroes do not intend to go to Africa. America is the best place, he added. We don't know any more about Africa than you do.

Freeman said it is unfortunate and regrettable that Negro history has been omitted from the history of the country. He then traced the history of organized religion among Negroes in America.

In the 17th century there was a debate over whether Negroes had the possibility for salvation, and whether a Christian could be held as a slave, or whether converted slaves should be liberated.

It was not until the "Great Awakening" of the first half of the 18th century that Negroes became Christians in large numbers, and Methodists and Baptists were most active in evangelizing the Negro.

Baptists in 1789 took a strong position against slavery, Freeman said, and during the Second Awakening from 1790-1860, Baptists accepted Negroes and slaves into their churches as brothers, with no segregation in seating. "You can see why Negroes would flock to the churches if for no more than to act free from one day in the week," he said.

As the number of slaves grew in the churches, white people began to place restrictions on them, such as denial of voting privileges, seating in the back or in the galleries, and eventually to total segregation of worship when Negroes became too responsive in their "Amens" and shouts "when the minister would toss a few crumbs of the gospel their way."

The first known Negro Baptist church to organize was at Silver Bluff, Aiken County, South Carolina, between 1773 and 1776. Two early Negro ministers became foreign missionaries to West Africa and to Jamaica in 1792 and 1782 respectively.

"It is noteworthy here that a man of color went out to a foreign country from America and founded a work (abroad) before William Carey or Adoniram Judson," Freeman said. "This is no attempt to take credit from either of these pioneers of Christian missions but it is to say that a Negro had the same inspiration as these giants had to evangelize in foreign parts."

The Negro Church became "the repository of the Negro's ambitions and traditions because it was the only instrument he owned that could get and maintain respect for him among his contemporaries in the white economy," Freeman said. "...The only real source of power and influence he had to turn to was his church."

In another major address, English Baptist historian B. R. White said that church history must always be interpreted in the light of secular history, for secular society provides at least 95 per cent of the context in which any man or institution actually lived.

Baptist history must also be interpreted in the light of the wider history of the Church (universal) which provides "the tremendous value of taking seriously the continuing presence and work of the Holy Spirit in every age of the Church's history," White said.

Although tradition is extremely important in understanding how God has moved in history, Baptists "dare not allow their decision making today to be dominated by the precedents of their yesterday," White said.

He gave two reasons: (1) because the past does not speak with a single voice, and (2) because to do so would "bolt and bar another door: that against the continuing, contemporary guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church through the Scriptures."

White said that there is no "single true, mainstream, orthodox and authoritative Baptist tradition which is easily separable from the remainder of total tradition.

"Even if it were possible to establish what most Baptists at most times in most places had believed, it would not be right to believe that the views of the majority should automatically be determinative in the manner. God does not necessarily speak through majorities."

He pointed out that tradition may err, or the record of tradition might be wrong, and thus it is not enough to know what decision was taken, but rather how and why.

"There may come a time when, having weighed the demands of the present in the light of the past, Baptists may be required by the Spirit to cut loose from all their yesterdays," White concluded. "Such radical decisions are, of course, required far less often, and of necessity must always prove far less complete than the revolutionaries among us may wish to recognize."

Colorado Missionary Named
SBC Historical Society Head

NASHVILLE (BP)--The superintendant of missions for the Denver Baptist Association in Colorado, George Gaskins, was elected here as president of the Southern Baptist Historical Society.

Meeting here in connection with the SBC Historical Commission, the society, an auxiliary of the commission open to anyone interested in Baptist history, named the Colorado Baptist leader to succeed Mrs. Ollin J. Owens of South Carolina as president.

Elected vice president of the society was Spencer King, chairman of the history department at Mercer University, Macon, Ga.

Re-elected as secretary was H. I. Hester, former vice president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., now retired in Liberty, Mo.; and re-elected treasurer was Davis C. Woolley, executive secretary of the Historical Commission.

The commission, composed of representatives elected by the Southern Baptist Convention, had earlier elected W. Morgan Patterson, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, as its new chairman.

Other officers re-elected by the commission were Richard N. Owen, retired editor of The Baptist and Reflector of Nashville, Tenn., as vice chairman; Martin Bradley, secretary of the research and statistics department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, as secretary; and Woolley as treasurer.

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SBC HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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