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400 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

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77-5

'Saving' Puppets May Confuse
Childrens' Concept of God

By Nancy McGough

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Can puppets be Christian?

Of course not, asserts seminarian Joan King, and she will not allow her puppets to be "saved" in a skit she performs.

Joan, a religious education student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, is a veteran puppeteer who takes her puppetry seriously. She has what might be called a "theology of puppets" and believes puppets can help children understand Bible truths, but they can also hinder them, she says:

"I feel very strongly that puppets should never be 'saved'; they should never pray to God. This confuses younger children. Once they realize these puppets are not real, they may think, 'everything else I've seen is like a cartoon on television.'

"The puppets can show all of the good qualities, and occasionally one puppet may have a bad quality that it overcomes, but we don't go into any depth sin or depth saving. I don't believe that's what puppets are for," she added.

Joan considers it all right to use puppets to tell a Bible story in Sunday Schools and children's church, "as long as children do not confuse the Bible character with someone in a storybook.

"But if we use biblical characters too much, the younger children might confuse the truth with unreality."

Joan became interested in puppetry through her home church, Northside Baptist Church in Jasper, Ala. Out of necessity she began making her own puppets--her first was a lion--and she has since made such characters as Chuck Woods (the woodchuck), the Flower Turtle, and Alfred the Inchworm.

Except for Chuck, Joan left her other puppets with the Northside puppeteers, "Salt 'n Pepper."

Joan and Salt 'n Pepper have performed for camps, churches, and for numerous retreats and banquets.

But a group of men attending the Alabama Baptist state deacon's retreat this past year proved to be their best audience.

"They responded better than any group we've ever had. I was afraid to do a deacon's retreat. Would they think, 'this is silly'?"

"But they liked it."

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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICESBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor**BUREAUS**

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461

RICHMOND Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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Graham Clarifies Views
On Alcoholic Beverages

MINNEAPOLIS (BP)--"At no time did evangelist Billy Graham state he thought it was all right for President-elect Jimmy Carter to drink an occasional highball. He did not even mention highballs," a spokesman for Graham's evangelistic association said here.

Graham stated his position against drinking of alcohol--except for medicinal purposes--after a news report of an interview carried a "partial transcript of Mr. Graham's views, and subsequent reports across the country conveyed some deductions that were not intended," said Forrest Boyd, Graham's communications director.

In a prepared statement, to be used on a future "Hour of Decision" syndicated broadcast by Graham, the Baptist evangelist said he was "pleased to note that President-elect Carter has said no hard drinks will be served at the White House during his administration .."

Graham cited statistics and reasons why he believed consumption of alcoholic beverages was undesirable, and noted:

"Most Americans have been too indifferent concerning this problem of drinking. They hark back to the days when people cried, 'Prohibition causes drinking.' But they don't seem to be aware that legalized liquor has brought even more drinking.

"We must admit, in all honesty, that teetotalism as we know it today, was found only in certain individuals in the scriptures, especially those who had taken the Nazarite vow, like John the Baptist," Graham said.

"The alcoholic beverages of the middle east in that period were very much weaker than modern drink. Biblical scholars, such as Alfred Edersheim tell us that the wine of biblical times was mixed with water," he added.

The evangelist, while saying the Bible teaches that alcohol can be used for medicinal purposes, quoted the Apostle Paul:

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth . . ." (Romans 14:21).

Graham continued, "But he (Paul) also made it clear that we have a free conscience before the Lord and are not to judge the one who feels it is wrong to eat and drink . . . Nor are we to judge the one who does . . . it unto the Lord . . . does not hurt the testimony of Christ--and does not cause a brother to stumble.

"However," Graham said, "It is my judgment that because of the devastating problem that alcohol has become in America, it is better for Christians to be teetotalers, except for medicinal purposes."

-30-

'Getting to Know You'
Americans to CanadiansBaptist Press
1/11/77

FORT WORTH (BP)--"Getting to know you," might well be the theme song Americans will sing to Canadians Sunday, February 20, when National Broadcasting Company (NBC) airs "Beyond Niagara," a special one-hour color documentary on Canada's historical, cultural, and religious development.

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The documentary, produced by the network in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, emphasizes the history and work of Christians within the Baptist Federation of Canada. Alexander Scourby is host-narrator of the production which will be aired on the network from 5-6 p.m., EST (check local TV logs for time and date in your area).

"Beyond Niagara" takes viewers to spectacular Niagara Falls, to Port Royal in Nova Scotia--the continent's oldest permanent settlement north of the Spanish outpost in St. Augustine in Florida--and to major cities, including Quebec, Montreal, and Ottawa.

The documentary details some of the services performed for Canadians by local Baptist churches, traces the nation's history, and displays some of the country's art museums.

The film was produced by Doris Ann, NBC's manager of religious programming. Joe Vadala was photographer. The script was written by Philip Scharper. Truett Myers, senior vice president, production services, Radio and Television Commission, and Paul M. Stevens, Commission president, were consultants.

-30-

Lottie Moon Fared Well
In the Briar Patch

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GREENVILLE, S. C. (BP)--Lottie Moon was thrown into the Briar Patch and like her legendary predecessor, Brer Rabbit, she fared well by the experience.

In the wellknown tales of Uncle Remus, Brer Rabbit begged Brer Fox, "Please don't throw me in the briar patch."

Truth is--that is the very place Brer Rabbit wanted to be. The briar patch was his home.

Greenville's Briar Patch is an ice cream and snack shop, owned by three Baptists--Dennis Henderson, Carroll Waddell and Gene Carpenter--all members of Pelham Road Baptist Church.

The three pledged Christmas Eve receipts to Southern Baptists' annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and had their "best day in the company's history." The company's nine employees are all Baptists.

The business took in \$811 for the day and, after subtracting taxes, placed a check for \$779 in the mail to Harold Cole, general secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

A youth group from East Park Baptist Church in Greenville cleaned tables, while the youth and adult choirs from Lee Road Baptist Church, Greenville, provided music.

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Baptist, Reformed Leaders
Deepen Theological Insights

Baptist Press
1/11/77

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP)--As the fourth and final round of theological conversations between the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) ended here, one of the Baptist participants noted they had brought better mutual understanding between the two world religious bodies.

"We have experienced this growing understanding not only theologically, but spiritually," said Rudolf Thaut, director of the Baptist Seminary at Hamburg.

Thaut, one of the representatives on the BWA side since the inception of the talks in early 1973, claimed that being questioned by the reformed tradition had brought the Baptist participants to a better appreciation of that tradition.

"But this has led us to a deeper understanding of our own position," he added.

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The final round touched on three areas: the Holy Spirit; baptism and membership in the church of Jesus Christ, the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ and ministries in the church and the church local and universal.

Thaut stressed that the talks' four separate sessions have not been limited to an academic exercise. "The work of local churches and our work for the local churches has been a main point of emphasis.

"We hope the results of our reports may go to local congregations of both constituent bodies," he pointed out. "This would help them to better comprehend one another as well as the tasks given them from our Lord and create better cooperation in the propagation of the Gospel in today's world."

With this in mind, the two groups have asked their respective executives to allow time for partial reports on the talks at their next meetings--the BWA General Council will meet in Guatemala City this July, and the WARC executive convenes in August.

Eventually, the theologians who have met for the talks hope for echos from local congregations. Each side then would consider these unilaterally, since no further official talks are scheduled.

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Court to Hear Ohio
Parochial Aid Case

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By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court announced here that it will decide this spring whether an Ohio law which provides a wide range of services to nonpublic school children violates the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Ohio's statute, signed into law in August 1975, replaces a previous one struck down by the high court's decision nearly two years ago invalidating a similar Pennsylvania law. The new law in Ohio provides \$88 million for parochial school children and their parents.

The state of Ohio has engaged in similar aid programs in various forms for the last nine years. Actual payments to parochial schools or parochial school children have flowed virtually uninterrupted during the entire nine-year period.

Ohio's new law was challenged in November 1975 before a three-judge federal district court in a suit brought by several individual taxpayers. In a unanimous decision, that court upheld the law as not violating the First Amendment.

The law provides for many services to children enrolled in nonpublic schools, including textbook loans; loans of "secular, neutral and nonideological" instructional materials; loans of instructional equipment; speech and hearing diagnostic services; physician, nursing, dental, and optometric services;

Also included are therapeutic psychological, speech, and hearing services; guidance and counseling services; remedial services; standardized tests and scoring services; programs for the deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, crippled, and physically handicapped; and field trip transportation.

The citizens challenging the law's constitutionality before the nation's high court insist that the program is essentially similar to that of Pennsylvania, which was struck down in 1975 (Meek v. Pittenger). They accuse the State of Ohio of engaging in a "sham" by enacting the new law which claims to aid children and their parents but not the parochial schools themselves, as was the case in Pennsylvania.

"Ohio's latest effort to assist religious schools," attorneys for the citizens argued, "amounts to an end run" around previous Supreme Court guidelines.

The state countered by urging the high court either to dismiss the case or affirm the lower court's decision on grounds that its law "doesn't directly or indirectly put money in the nonpublic school coffers. It simply removes handicaps and enriches the learning opportunities of deprived children."

Attorneys for the state argued also that throughout its nine-year history, Ohio's effort to aid nonpublic schools has demonstrated that it passes First Amendment tests.

-more-

1/11/77

Page 5

Baptist Press

At issue in the case is the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment as applied to the Ohio law. In 1975 the Supreme Court reaffirmed a three-part test which programs such as the one in Ohio must pass: (1) the law must have a secular purpose; (2) it must have a "primary effect" that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and (3) the law and its administration must avoid excessive governmental entanglement with religion.

The high court must now decide if Ohio's newest effort to provide public funds to parochial schools measures up to those principles.

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'I Knew He Was Going
To Kill Us:' Minister

Baptist Press
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WICHITA, Kan. (BP)--"Our timetable was running out. There was no question in my mind that he was going to kill us."

With that fear, Bryon Tracy, pastor of Riverview Southern Baptist Church here, and six other hostages sat under the watchful eye of a gunman during a bizarre 4 1/2 hours that ended when sheriff's department sharpshooters killed the would-be outlaw.

Tracy, 50, a chaplain with the Wichita police and county sheriff's offices, had just ministered to the family of a suicide victim and was about to end his chaplain's shift when a call came in over the police radio.

A Haysville policeman had been shot--superficially wounded--by a man holding several children hostage in a suburban home.

The minister subsequently became part of a team that entered the Haysville home to talk the gunman, Larry Leer, into surrendering.

Leer, a former mental patient, had requested the team and "wanted me there," as clergy, along with law enforcement and psychiatry professionals "to convince his girlfriend she should go back with him," Tracy said.

On entering the house, Tracy, Leer's girlfriend Lonnie Bean, Wichita lawyer Warner Eisenbise, and counselor Charles Pickard, were assigned seats in the living room. Leer kept a .22 caliber revolver and 12 gauge automatic shotgun trained on the group--both guns were loaded and cocked, Tracy said.

The four joined Sedgwick County Sheriff Johnnie Darr and Wichita Police Lts. Harry Minor and Bernie Drowatsky.

"My concern was for the children," Tracy recalled. "I had been praying beforehand for the hostages and gunman. I had a peace because I felt the Lord wanted me there. He was with me in a very real, satisfying, peaceful way."

Before entering the house, Tracy sent word to his wife, waiting in a car, that he would be going in as a hostage. About 30 churches were notified who prayed about the situation in their mid-week services.

It became apparent, Tracy noted, that "Leer knew his back was to the wall and that he must either surrender or die. He wanted to go out in a blaze of glory, and he wanted to take us with him. I was assured of that."

Efforts to discuss Jesus Christ with Leer failed. "I spoke to him concerning his relationship to the Lord, but he said he knew all about the Bible and all he needed to know about God."

As the minutes crept by, the hostages drank coffee with Leer and tried to take his mind off the guns and police activity outside.

As Tracy served Leer coffee, the gunman held the cocked revolver four-to-five inches from the minister's head.

In anticipation of a possible bloodbath, the minister positioned his chair so he could rock backward or could dive into the kitchen area, if he was in the line of fire.

"I expected a lot of shooting. I had seen machine guns, rifles, shotguns and teargas."

Eight hours after the siege began, about 9 p.m., Dec. 29, the hostages began to talk about a wedding--Leer's. As they chatted, two shots fired simultaneously by sheriff's officers, crashed through a window and hit Leer in the chest. The gunman was dead when he hit the floor, officials said.

In the aftermath, Tracy was able to share Jesus Christ with the two officers who shot Leer--both were in tears.

"We've had some opportunities to share Christ with people you'd never get in a church," he said, referring to his chaplain's ministry.

"I was asked by a guy last night, 'What would you do if your church said you couldn't do that anymore?' I'd say you'd better find another minister, because I feel the church should be involved in community affairs."

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Chuck Alexander is a reporter for the Wichita Eagle and Beacon, daily newspaper in Wichita, Kan.