



-- **FEATURES**
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Ex-Convict Starts Career
As Filipino Evangelist

By Mike Creswell

MANILA, Philippines (BP)—One of the most famous ex-convicts in the Philippines has become the newest Baptist evangelist in the islands after being paroled from prison on Christmas Day, 1980.

Roger Arienda was a nationally known communist agitator when sentenced to prison in 1972 for possession of illegal weapons. While in prison he became a Christian in 1975 and then a vibrant witness who has led more than 2,000 people to Christ.

He helped establish a Baptist church, with convicts as deacons, on the grounds of New Bilibid Prison near Manila, and on June 29, 1980, became the first man in the Philippines ever ordained a pastor while in prison.

Southern Baptist missionaries who knew of Arienda's work in prison are excited about the prospects for his future. Furloughing missionary Marjorie Olive, who with her husband, Howard, led Arienda in Bible studies and correspondence courses, reported that he was released from prison at 6 p.m. on Christmas Day, a Thursday. By the following Sunday he had led 30 of his neighbors in suburban Manila to Christ.

That Sunday morning he preached at Village Baptist Church, which ordained him to the ministry. Sunday afternoon Arienda held services in his garage with an eye toward establishing a new church in his neighborhood.

Since then he has averaged telling 300 to 500 people daily about Christ's love. He saw 1,000 people accept Christ as their savior during a recent tour of three universities in Baguio City.

Arienda also has begun several Bible study groups averaging 40 adults. "We need more church planters just to keep up with Roger's contacts," says James Slack, a Southern Baptist missionary church planter in metro Manila. It normally takes six to eight months to build a Bible study for 40.

"We have so many dreams for Roger," Mrs. Olive said. "The public is just beginning to hear what has happened to him."

Missionary Bill Tisdale, who directs church growth for the local Baptist mission, has worked closely with Arienda for the past year and speaks confidently about the former prisoner's future. "I see Roger in the role of a pastor-evangelist," he said. "God has given Roger the vision to lead in the establishment and development of a Baptist super church in metro Manila to serve as a basis for evangelizing throughout the Philippines and perhaps into other countries."

Arienda's fiery speeches calling for an overthrow of the government and adoption of communism prompted several attempts on his life in the early 1970s. The weapons he carried led to a 12-year prison sentence in 1972 after Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law.

Arienda had been in prison three years, fighting boredom and loneliness, when one day in the library he picked up a book to read. It had a red cover and he thought it was a communist book. Instead, it was a Bible. Out of sheer desperation he read it.

He read about a new sort of revolution called for by Christ which included forgiving enemies instead of killing them as communism had taught. Peace and tranquility began replacing the hate, anger and loneliness in his heart. When he finally accepted Christ through his Bible reading, he actually visited the prison doctor because he thought something was wrong with his heart. It felt different, he said.

The Olives enrolled Arienda in Bible correspondence courses offered through the Baptist Hour television program they direct and he completed every course in record time.

Arienda soon began witnessing and preaching in the national prison with dramatic results: over the five-year period more than 2,000 inmates, prison officials and their families were baptized in fish ponds or pools used to hold drinking water. Eventually Simbahan Kristiyano Southern Baptist Church was formed within the prison and Arienda became pastor. His cell-mate, Cesar Guy, became a deacon and began leading Bible studies in the maximum security area.

As knowledge of Arienda's dramatic conversion spread, lawyers, doctors, movie stars and writers began visiting him in prison and he led many of these outsiders to Christ. Christians from across the Philippines came to Arienda for counseling.

Marjorie Olive believes the final breakthrough on getting Arienda's long-delayed parole came through the work of Dr. and Mrs. Eli Sarmiento, a Baptist husband and wife doctor team who had taken a special interest in his case. One of their patients who was close to Marcos is reported to have interceded on Arienda's behalf.

Arienda no longer holds to his old political ideas for changing society. "A utopian society is only possible when Christ is made the total leader," he says.

He still talks of revolution, but it is a revolution of the heart that comes with faith in Christ.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Management Head Resigns
At Sunday School Board

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Wayne H. Chastain has resigned as director of the management services division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board effective Feb. 9, 1981.

James W. Clark, executive vice president of the Sunday School Board, indicated that Chastain's outside business activities interfered with his function as director of the management services division. Clark will serve as director for a short time until an interim director can be named.

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Chastain began work for the Sunday School Board in 1958 as director of Camp Ridgecrest (N.C.) for Boys, where he stayed until 1964, when he moved to Nashville as a consultant in management services. He became assistant to the director of the management services division in 1966 and was named director in 1968.

Clark said the interim director will head the management services division until a permanent successor can be elected by Sunday School Board trustees.

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Microphone Is God's Gift,
FCC Head Tells Broadcasters

Baptist Press
2/12/81

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Broadcasters are accountable for their use of "God's gift, the microphone," according to Federal Communications Commission acting Chairman Robert E. Lee.

Lee, keynote speaker at the 1981 Abe Lincoln Awards ceremony sponsored by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, told the group that the technology making broadcasting possible is a gift of God to be used "to preach love to all people of all lands."

Lee warned the broadcasters not to be "so enamored of the gadget and its power (broadcasting) that we forget its purpose."

Lee affirmed his opposition to government censorship and said, "In a way, the absence of accountability to government increases the programmer's accountability to some higher authority—to the people and to God."

Lee also offered advice to Christians who use broadcasting as a ministry.

"It would be unfortunate if broadcast evangelists allowed themselves to become mere sloganeers for the proponents of some political positions on serious and complex national and international issues," he warned.

"I fear that, in the efforts to find God on our side of an issue, we may lose sight of the true Word of God."

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Missionaries Detained Briefly
In Two East African Countries

Baptist Press
2/12/81

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary family in Ethiopia and a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) team in Tanzania were detained briefly by government authorities in early February.

Lynn and Suzanne Groce of Missouri and Florida, their three children, and three Ethiopians with them were detained in the Minjir district east of their home in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, after they entered a vacant mission house without clear permission to do so. They were released the next day.

In Tanzania, five missionaries and a Tanzanian Baptist were surrounded Feb. 11 by 25 Tanzanian soldiers when they went to an airstrip near Masasi to return to Dar es Salaam after teaching TEE courses for several days. They were released four or five hours later.

Groce said their arrest stemmed from a misunderstanding because the area they were visiting straddles two districts. They had visited the Shenkora district three times in the previous month to plan water development projects there, and the district administrator had suggested they stay in the mission-owned house.

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But when the Groces and helpers returned to prepare the house for occupation by a missionary family, that official was out and a lesser official did not feel they had clear permission to enter the house across the district line. The house never had been occupied because Southern Baptist missionaries had left the country temporarily in 1977 because of political turmoil and were restricted until recently to working in the capital after they returned in 1978.

No charges were placed against the Groces and they feel the incident may result in their receiving clear permission to move freely in both districts, thus aiding their work. Groce called the detention an inconvenience. The entire family spent two days in their car and the night between slept on the jail floor.

The Tanzania team was preparing to leave the Masasi area early Feb. 11 when five armed soldiers approached and interrogated them. Soon joined by 20 other armed soldiers, the five said they were conducting a security check and after several hours allowed the missionaries to go into Masasi.

There Larry Thomas of Texas, area missionary in Lindi who had set up the TEE program, called his wife in Lindi, who called Marty Akin, wife of Cordell Akin of Indiana, the pilot.

In Dar es Salaam Mrs. Akin called U.S. Embassy officials who contacted the Tanzanian government. Within an hour after Thomas placed his call, the men were released by government order.

Davis Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's director for eastern and southern Africa, says the incident happened because of overzealous army people in southern Tanzania and that the embassy and the Tanzanian government both were most cooperative in obtaining the men's release.

Other missionaries detained were Charles Bedenbaugh of South Carolina, a theological faculty member at the Baptist Seminary of East Africa, Arusha, Tanzania; Billy Oliver of Texas, an agricultural faculty member at the seminary; and Wayne Brown of Virginia, church development advisor in Moshi. Tanzanian Edward Mwaijande, also a seminary professor, was also detained.

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Religious Leaders Discuss
Government Intervention

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
2/12/81

WASHINGTON (BP)--A common interest in stemming government intervention into religious affairs linked Southern Baptist leaders with representatives of most of the U.S. religious community as a three-day conference on government intrusion opened at Bethesda, Md., a Washington, D.C., suburb.

Several examples of government intrusion were cited, including efforts by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to force Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, to furnish employment data on faculty and staff.

James E. Wood Jr., Simon Bunn professor of church-state studies and director of the J.M. Dawson Studies in Church and State at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, told the participants that the seminary refused to comply because it considered the jurisdiction "presumed" by the EEOC "unconstitutional" in that it violates First Amendment religious freedom guarantees.

In January 1980, U.S. District Judge Eldon Mahon ruled in favor of the seminary that EEOC did not have the right to seek employee records. However, Wood, former executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, indicated that the case has been appealed by EEOC and will be heard next month in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

The conference participants which represent religious bodies with more than 121 million adherents, were told by keynote speaker William B. Ball that government intrusion in religion is not usually due to "a conspiratorial design to put down religion."

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The prominent church-state attorney from Harrisburg, Pa., said government intrusion is often due to "inadvertent" or "bad drafting" of legislation. Ball cautioned religious leaders "not to have hostility cocked" toward what he described as "mostly amiable and competent local, state and federal public service."

However, he added that due to the "great inherent weight of governmental action and relative fragility of religious liberty," government should be "restrained from all looseness in defining the reach of the public interest and from carelessness where religious interests are involved."

In other case studies during the opening session, Philip E. Draheim, a St. Louis attorney, spoke on a refusal by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod colleges to file Internal Revenue Service information returns; and John E. Stumbo, a Topeka, Kan., attorney, discussed problems with the IRS encountered by religious coalitions organized primarily to lobby which seek to operate under the aegis of the tax exempt status of a religious organization or church.

Conference chairman William P. Thompson, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., cited seventeen cases of government intervention which he described as "alarming" when viewed together as a pattern.

Though Thompson emphasized there would be no findings or statements coming from the conference as a whole, individual religious bodies may do so.

Leaders of the SBC delegation include J. Howard Cobble, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and pastor of First Baptist Church, Avondale Estates, Ga., and Reggie McDonough, associate executive secretary and director of program planning of the SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn.

Following the first session, McDonough said the dialogue on government intrusion with other religious representatives is "valuable," adding "the conference will allow a cross section of religious groups to become sensitized to the problems that others face in this area."

Sponsoring groups other than the SBC are the Lutheran Council in the USA, National Association of Evangelicals, Synagogue Council of America, United States Catholic Conference, and National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

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CORRECTION: In Baptist Press story mailed 2/11/81 entitled "Resettlement Rate Rises, Sponsors Still Sought," graph three, first sentence should read: Hurt noted Southern Baptists ranked first in the number of Indochinese refugees sponsored (3,338) among more than 14 Christian denominations participating in Church World Service, the international resettlement agency.

Thanks,

Baptist Press