



November 30, 1982

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Angels Appearing
In Bethlehem Again

By Elizabeth F. Smith

BETHLEHEM (BP)--Shepherds in a field near Bethlehem are seeing and hearing angels again.

Twice weekly a "heavenly host" appears to give the glad tidings of Christmas. Four little blond angels leave the host and skip along, leading the shepherds to a stable.

The four, children of Southern Baptist representatives to Israel who live in Jerusalem, are part of the cast of "The Nativity Play of Bethlehem."

The shepherds are Arabs from villages in the Judean hills and the 60 or more other actors in the scene are Americans or Israelis of Christian, Moslem and Jewish backgrounds.

On Sunday and Wednesday evenings hundreds of spectators, mostly overseas visitors, sit on bleachers to view the play enacted in a field owned by the YMCA. The "stage" is known locally as Shepherd's Field.

The hour-long play, written and directed by Francisco de Araujo, was performed each Christmas for seven years near the White House in Washington, D.C. Last year de Araujo and his professional theater company brought the play to Israel along with his original "Passion Play of Jerusalem."

Since they started their angel roles, the true meaning of Christmas has become real to Allison and Tyler Anthony (children of John and Connie Anthony of Arkansas), Melody Burnham, (daughter of Jim and Mary Anne Burnham of Georgia and Tennessee) and David Peach (son of Jarrell and Shirley Peach of Texas and Missouri).

All four children agree angels come from God. Tyler, almost six years old, says an angel is "a spirit of God in heaven," who is "in rooms when kids are scared."

"How do we act the part of an angel?" Melody, 10, asked. "We have to be graceful and flowing and not smile." The idea of an angel's not smiling is also hard for eight-year-old Allison. She has looked at many pictures of angels and not found one smiling. "They are so solemn," she exclaimed.

Not smiling is the thing Melody likes least about being in the play. David, also eight, said he has to work hard to keep his younger friend, Tyler, from looking at the audience. "'cause he will get into trouble if he does'."

It was at Allison's initiative that the children tried out for the play when the director came to their school looking for actors.

Allison talked Melody into going with her. Little brother Tyler tagged along for the adventure. All three were chosen and were asked to bring along a friend who also had blond hair. David was their unanimous choice.

When they finish the play's 20-week season, David and the girls want to be in another play. However, Tyler is not interested. "I didn't ask to be in the play," Tyler explained realistically. "Frank wanted me because of my blond hair."

Many animals are used in the play--horses, camels, donkeys and sheep. The 10 sheep sometimes cause the children problems during the manger scene when they get close enough to tickle them or nibble at their costumes. Their big friend, the angel Gabriel (played by Randy Allen Hill, a recent high school graduate from Maryland) tries to make the animals move away so the children can remain very still.

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David described their costumes as "long and white, sorta like a robe with holes for your hands." Melody added, "when you hold up your arms they look like wings." A gold belt and sandals complete the costume. David confided they also wear long pants and thermal undershirts, "'cause we would freeze half to death if we didn't'."

When the children leave Bethlehem they leave their costumes behind. Is their angel-like behavior left behind also or do they act like angels at home? "Not really," David admitted, "I never think of it." Allison answered with an emphatic "No" and explained, "I act like a little girl, sometimes good, sometimes bad."

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

SBC Moderates
Continue Organization

Baptist Press
11/30/82

ATLANTA (BP)--The "moderate-conservative" faction of the SBC, a group organized to counter the "takeover" of the denomination by inerrantists is not being disbanded.

The announcement came from Cecil Sherman, chairman of the group's steering committee, following its meeting in Atlanta attended by 14 persons.

Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., said, "We are not disbanded. We will continue to speak to the issues of Southern Baptist life."

That the group would continue was questioned when one of its leaders--Kenneth Chafin of South Main Baptist Church in Houston--announced his withdrawal.

Chafin attended a meeting Nov. 12 in Irving, Texas, of 40 denominational leaders to discuss the future and the state of the denomination. It was chaired by SBC President James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas.

Afterwards, he said the moderate-conservatives would no longer oppose the inerrantists politically.

Chafin did attend the Atlanta meeting and at its close reaffirmed his earlier announcement, "I will no longer attend meetings of the group." However, he made it clear he was not disassociating himself from the group. He said the group had his support and could associate his name with their interests.

The steering committee named Vernon Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Va., as vice chairman. "We will meet in March and discuss again how we ought to plan for the Pittsburgh convention," Sherman said.

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Cooperative Program
Giving Up 16.59 Percent

Baptist Press
11/30/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Financial support for Bold Mission Thrust continues to increase, according to the latest report on Cooperative Program receipts from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

For October, the first month in the committee's fiscal year, the 34 state conventions which make up the Southern Baptist Convention contributed \$7,972,260 to the national and worldwide mission and educational causes of the SBC.

That reflects an increase of 16.59 percent (\$1,134,449) over donations in October 1981.

Due to differences in the payment schedules of the different states, percent increase and decrease figures are not very meaningful after one month of the fiscal year. However, the 18 conventions which sent at least \$50,000 to the Cooperative Program in October all showed increases over 1981 as did 26 of the 34 conventions.

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Five conventions contributed more than \$500,000 each to help underwrite Bold Mission Thrust, the SBC effort to present the message of Jesus Christ to the entire world by the year 2000: Texas, \$1,350,650; North Carolina, \$630,161; Georgia, \$623,421; Alabama, \$619,093 and Tennessee, \$548,976.

Designated contributions (in addition to Cooperative Program gifts) from the states jumped over the \$1 million mark for October to \$1,016,879--an increase of 5.17 percent over the same month last year.

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China, Malaysia
Missionary Dies At 79

Baptist Press
11/30/82

CALHOUN, Ga. (BP)--Jessie Green, one of two missionaries who elected to remain in Wuchow, China with Bill Wallace after the country was taken over by communists, died Nov. 25 in Calhoun, Ga. She was 79.

Green escaped from Wuchow shortly after the Communists reached that city because it was feared her safety as an evangelistic worker was less secure than that of the other missionaries, both medical workers. Wallace, later imprisoned by the Communists, died in Wuchow. The other missionary, Everley Hayes, was allowed to leave the country six months after his death. Wallace was later the subject of the book "Bill Wallace of China."

For 15 years before the Communist takeover Green was a rural evangelistic worker, principal of a Bible school in Wuchow and teacher of English-language Bible classes in Tsunyi.

When she transferred to Malaysia after escaping from China she became Southern Baptists' second missionary to that country. She helped Chinese Baptists in Kuala Lumpur begin a church and worked with this group and other Baptist churches in the capital area for nine years.

From 1959-61 she did religious education promotion in Ipoh, Malaysia.

Her final assignment was in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, where she was the superintendent of the Baptist center with a program that included various religious organizations, a kindergarten, adult education classes and a lending library. She retired in 1968 after 32 years.

She was born in Adairsville, Ga., received the bachelor of arts degree from Tift College, Forsyth, Ga., and the master of Christian training degree from Baptist Bible Institute (now New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary). She also studied at Woman's Missionary Union Training School (now merged with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), Louisville, Ky., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

She taught in the public schools of Georgia and did mission work among the French-speaking people of Louisiana before her appointment in 1936.

Funeral services were held Nov. 27 in Calhoun, Ga. She is survived by two brothers, Dwight T. Green of Calhoun and G. Truett Green of Cedartown, Ga.

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

Illinois Family Sees
Unemployment As Blessing

CALUMET CITY, Ill. (BP)--During a year when some families faced added tension due to an unemployed father being home and underfoot, one Baptist housewife counted the loss of her husband's job as a major Thanksgiving blessing.

In response to an invitation from the Illinois Baptist, Mrs. Robert (Margaret) Blackburn, a member of First Baptist Church of Calumet City, wrote a letter of gratitude published during Thanksgiving week.

"Most of the letters listed good health, family and the like," editor Robert J. Hastings said. "Margaret's letter was different in that she actually thanked God for a disappointment."

In her letter Blackburn said when she married in 1979 there was little opportunity for the couple to get to know each other, in part, because her husband's three-year-old son, Patrick, occupied much of their time.

"The Lord answered my request for better understanding by laying my husband off from work," Blackburn wrote. "Although it wasn't the answer I wanted, it has been a blessing."

"This past year is when we really got to know and enjoy each other. Patrick, now seven, was in school all day. The man I discovered during the quiet hours of the day is truly a Christ-filled man. We had theological arguments, Bible trivia contests, spent hours window shopping and dreaming . . . plus good old fun all year.

"Last summer Robert made it to every one of Patrick's ball games and his team came in first. That was an answer to a boy's prayer!

"Now that we've had time together and discovered one another we're waiting for the Lord to find my husband a job. He's filled out innumerable applications--all with no visible results. But we're not worried, at least not much. God will answer this prayer too."

Before being laid off Robert was a saw operator and inspector at Kaiser Aluminum at nearby Dalton, five minutes from their home.

Calumet City is southeast of Chicago.

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Tanzanians Example
In Prayers And Giving

By Evelyn Knapp

Baptist Press
11/30/82

KATETE, Tanzania (BP)--In this small Tanzanian village, not printed on anyone's map, 36 women from 10 nearby churches sat on straw mats under a mango tree and prayed together.

Babies were nursing, toddlers playing nearby, a stray chicken scratching in the dirt.

It was the Baptist Women's Day of Prayer, a worldwide observance. These women had met to pray for far-away places, some on the other side of the world. They knew nothing about the people except they had problems and needed prayer.

Most of the women were illiterate but several younger ones had been to school and discussed the program with the older women.

They prayed in Swahili and Nyakyusa. They prayed for two hours that a missionary might go to work with the Aborigines in Australia, for Christian literature to be printed in Hausa and Yoruba in Nigeria, for the gospel to be effectively preached in Spain--and on and on.

They also brought offerings to be used all over Africa. One woman brought \$14, several \$5 and others lesser amounts. In Tanzania, \$12 represents a week's wages at the minimum wage level for those fortunate enough to have a job.

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Nelusigwe, the young woman who brought the \$14, lives with her husband on a small three-acre subsistence farm near Katete. If the weather is good he will harvest several bags of rice and corn a year, a few baskets of beans, sweet potatoes and cassava. He also has a small patch of plantains (cooking bananas) in the backyard. These products must feed him and his wife and their three young children for a year.

But they care. They care for a world about which they know very little. They care enough to pray and give.

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(Evelyn Knapp, a Southern Baptist missionary, is press representative for missionaries in Tanzania.)

WMU Meets Old Need
With New Publication

Baptist Press
11/30/82

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A new monthly missions booklet geared to deaf women and to women whose second language is English is now being published by Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention.

Called Our Missions World, the booklet is thought to be the first missions material published for these two groups within the SBC. According to Doris Diaz, director of the WMU language department, plans have been discussed for at least ten years.

Ten issues of the booklet will be mission study material adapted from Royal Service, WMU's magazine for Baptist women. The other two issues will contain materials for the weeks of prayer for home and foreign missions. The first issue is the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions material to be used this December.

Those interested in receiving a complimentary copy should write Doris Diaz, Language WMU Department, 600 North 20th Street, P.O. Box C-10, Birmingham, Ala., 35283-0010. A year's subscription is offered free. However, WMU requests \$2.50 to offset mailing costs.

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