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84-97

Supreme Court Wrapup

Church-State Actions Reflect
High Court's Rightward Drift

By Stan Haste

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a two-part series on the recently completed term of the U.S. Supreme Court.)

WASHINGTON (BP)--Church-state actions by the U.S. Supreme Court in its just-concluded term reflected a perceptible rightward drift as an emerging conservative majority of justices took firm control on the nation's highest tribunal.

After more than a decade of struggling for an identity of its own in the wake of the liberal court led by the late Chief Justice Earl Warren, the court of current Chief Justice Warren E. Burger finally began to bear the clear imprint of his judicial conservatism. Along with fellow conservatives William H. Rehnquist, Sandra Day O'Connor, Lewis F. Powell Jr. and Byron R. White, the Burger court began to reclaim large chunks of judicial ground in virtually every area of constitutional law. Church-state law was no exception.

In its headline church-state case of the term, those five justices ruled that cities and towns may erect Christmas nativity scenes without violating the Constitution's ban on an establishment of religion. The 5-4 decision upheld a 40-year tradition in Pawtucket, R.I., of erecting a city-sponsored Christmas display that included a nativity scene accompanied by secular seasonal figures.

Although two lower federal courts agreed that including the creche amounted to an unconstitutional mingling of church and state, Burger wrote for the majority that Thomas Jefferson's "wall of separation" between the two realms "is not a wholly accurate description of the practical aspects of the relationship that in fact exists between church and state."

Citing numerous national traditions acknowledging a belief in God, Burger concluded the Pawtucket practice passed constitutional tests because the nativity scene was but a "passive symbol" which as part of a larger Christmas display "engenders a friendly community spirit" and "serves the commercial interests" of merchants.

Among the vigorous dissenters, Justice Harry A. Blackmun objected that "The creche has been relegated to the role of a neutral harbinger of the holiday season, useful for commercial purposes, but devoid of any inherent meaning and incapable of enhancing the religious tenor of a display of which it is an integral part." *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 104 S.Ct. 1355 (1984)

In its other major church-state decision of the term, the high court ruled unanimously that private colleges and universities--including church-related schools--must indicate compliance with anti-sex discrimination laws or see their students lose federal financial assistance.

Despite efforts by attorneys specializing in church-state law to sway the court, all nine justices concluded that the U.S. Department of Education acted within the law by stripping students at Presbyterian-related Grove City (Pa.) College of Pell grants after the school refused to submit forms pledging it does not discriminate against women.

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Attorneys for the college argued unsuccessfully that because the school does not discriminate against women and receives no direct financial assistance, it should be exempt from the Department of Education's compliance rule. *Grove City College v. Bell*, 104 S.Ct. 1211 (1984)

Another tightly contested case saw the moderate-to-liberal wing of the court lure away Justice White to fashion a 5-4 ruling that a Maryland law forbidding charitable organizations from paying expenses of more than 25 percent in connection with fund-raising activities violated the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech.

Justice Blackmun, writing for White and fellow moderate John Paul Stevens and the court's only two remaining consistently liberal justices, William J. Brennan Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, struck down a law designed to prevent fraudulent solicitation of funds.

The narrow majority held the law to be too broad and "imprecise," creating "an unnecessary risk of chilling free speech." The case was considered important in the church-state arena because the Maryland law was written as a hoped-for antidote to fraudulent solicitation by religious groups. *Secretary of State of Maryland v. Joseph H. Munson Co., Inc.*, 104 S.Ct. ____ (1984)

The Burger-Rehnquist-O'Connor-Powell-White coalition joined forces once more during the term's final week to rule that black parents who allege discrimination by private schools have no legal standing to challenge the schools' tax-exempt status.

Southern Baptist pastor W. Wayne Allen, of Memphis, Tenn., brought the appeal to the high court as an "intervenor" on IRS's side after his congregation's private school was cited by black parents as one of the allegedly discriminatory institutions. Allen vigorously denied the charge, insisting the school not only maintains an open admissions policy but vigorously recruits black pupils. *Allen v. Wright*, 104 S.Ct. ____ (1984)

Justice Brennan, writing for Stevens and Blackmun (Marshall abstained), accused the majority of displaying "a startling insensitivity to the historical role played by the federal courts in eradicating race discrimination from our nation's public schools."

And, in a final church-state decision, the court held unanimously that a Washington state court had authority to forbid newspapers from publishing information about members of a small religious group during the pretrial phase of a slander suit brought by the group's leader against the newspapers.

All nine justices agreed that two Washington newspapers were properly restrained by the trial court from disclosing the names, addresses and contributions of members of the Aquarian Foundation, a religious sect that believes in communicating with the dead. *Seattle Times Co. v. Rhinehart*, 104 S.Ct. 2199 (1984)

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Charles Stanley, Susan Wright
Give Opposing Ordination Views

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
7/10/84

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley and Chicago pastor Susan Lockwood Wright offered opposing viewpoints on ordination of women in opinion articles published by the Sunday Atlanta Journal and Constitution "Perspective" (opinion) section (July 8, 1984).

Stanley, who said in the article he accepted Christ at the age of 12 during a service (in Danville, Va.) when a woman was preaching, argued that the Bible teaches women should not be ordained or hold positions of authority in the church.

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Stanley countered in his article that the Bible does not say Phoebe was a deacon, but rather that she was "a servant of the church." Commenting also on Priscilla, Stanley wrote "there is no evidence that either of these or any of the other women mentioned in the chapter held positions of authority in any of the churches."

Quoting heavily from Stephen B. Clark's 700-page volume entitled "Man and Woman in Christ," Stanley observed that through 1,700 years of church history, there is no doubt as to the absence of women in positions of authority in the church. He insisted there were clear differences in role, and that whenever women exercised authority, they did so subordinate to a man.

"God in his wisdom has delegated different roles to men and women," Stanley wrote. "It is true both in the home and in the church.

"The Bible clearly teaches that in the home the woman is to be in subjection to her husband," Stanley added, citing Ephesians 5:24 as authority for his opinion. "Subordination does not mean inferiority," he observed. Noting an admonition in Ephesians 6:1 for children to be subordinate to their parents, Stanley said "this does not mean they are inferior. Their subordinate position is for their protection."

Stanley said God also has issued a strong command to husbands to "Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." Pointing out many women view denial of ordination as implying inferiority and striking at their sense of self-worth and equality, Stanley insisted "no woman so loved and cherished is going to feel inferior. The men of this generation will have to bear a great portion of the blame for the fact that many women do feel that we have not loved, honored, cared for, encouraged and esteemed them as highly as God commanded...Our failure to encourage women to become all God wants them to be has resulted in many of them feeling stifled, frustrated and unfulfilled."

Wright disagreed with those who argue "women cannot be church leaders because passages like Ephesians 5:21-23 teach women to be in submission. This passage," she claimed, "when read in its entirety teaches mutual submission. It applies to all Christians, regardless of their sex."

She also countered arguments that women should not hold certain offices because they were created after man and led to the fall in the Genesis account of temptation in the Garden of Eden. Such views, she said, "ignore the saving work of Christ on the cross who 'has broken down the barrier' so that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, ...slave nor free, ...male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28)." Wright gave a different interpretation of the biblical meaning of the authority of the pastor or deacon. "The call to Christian ministry is not to power or status or authority; rather it is a call to servanthood, characterized by self-denial, submission and service," she wrote. She quoted Jesus as admonishing his followers not to seek power and authority, "but whoever shall be great among you must be the slave of all." (Mark 10:42-44.)

Stanley, however, identified the key issues as authority and role.

"Ordination is not necessary for a woman to be effective and fulfilled in her service to the Lord," Stanley insisted. "To insist on ordination is to change God's design for carrying his ministry through his church."

Wright countered that ordination is not truly at the heart of the controversy regarding women as ministers, except for its symbolic significance. "Ordination of women usually sparks the controversy because it confirms that God not only can call women to be ministers, but that God does call women to be ministers."

Pointing out she knows God still calls women "because I have been called by God," Wright concluded, "God still calls whomever God chooses, and will continue to do so."

The two articles published as part of a special emphasis in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on the role of women in today's society reached a circulation of about 500,000 subscribers.

"A careful study of the Scriptures," wrote Stanley, "shows that the Bible, while forbidding a woman to hold a position of authority in the church, does not forbid her to teach and serve in numerous ways under certain guidelines of authority. In fact, the Bible does not forbid women from preaching. The issue is authority, not service. Role, not work. There are, no doubt, women who can preach, teach and fulfill many areas of service in the church more effectively than many men. Spirituality, gifts, talents or commitment are not the issue. The issue is authority and role."

Wright, pastor of Cornell Avenue Baptist Church of Chicago which was the center of controversy in the Chicago Metropolitan Baptist Association earlier this year, countered that the real issue is whether God calls women to be ministers. "Ordination is merely the confirmation by a local congregation that a person has evidenced gifts for ministry, and Southern Baptists have never believed that ordination makes anyone, male or female, a 'real' minister—only God can. A church can confirm; but only God can call.

"What this means, then, is that we must confront a much deeper issue, one that gets at the very nature of who God is," Wright continued. "For when we mortals begin to say who can and cannot be a minister, we are saying what God can and cannot do. We are, in essence, making ourselves equal with God and usurping God's power to choose whomever God chooses (Exodus 33:19). The technical term for this is idolatry—making God in our image...."

Both Stanley and Wright used Bible passages to support their viewpoints, sometimes giving different interpretations to the same scriptures. They also did not agree on the key questions and issues in the controversial topic.

"The question before us is not the ability of women, nor whether God uses them or not," wrote Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church. "The question is—should women be ordained as pastors or deacons of a local Baptist church? A crucial question that follows is this—is there an authoritative answer to this question? If not, then one opinion is as good as another. But if there is, what is the authority and what does it say? For Baptists, the Bible has always been our final authority for both faith and practice."

Stanley declared unequivocally "there is no evidence in Scripture that women served in a governing role. They did not serve as pastors or elders, or as deacons as we view the deacon role in a Baptist church."

Wright, whose church remained in the Chicago association by a vote of 210-113 in February during a special session called in response to objections to a woman serving as pastor, disagreed with those who, like Stanley, argue "God can call women to be ministers with a little 'm' but not to official offices of pastor and deacon."

"They base their views," she said, "on passages of Scripture which seem to prohibit women from leadership positions such as teachers, preachers and pastors (I Corinthians 14:34-36; I Timothy 2:12). But these passages," she argued, "do not in fact present a clear biblical teaching against women as church leaders; rather they deal with specific problems of false teaching and order in worship. To elevate these passages to universal principles prohibiting women from church leadership roles is to do violence to overall New Testament teaching," she contended. Wright cited five women by name plus several others who are mentioned in the Bible as having served as leaders in the early church in various roles. She listed Junia, an apostle mentioned in Romans 16:7; the women of the Corinthian church (I Corinthians 11:5), Phillip's four daughters (Acts 21:9), the aged widow Anna (Luke 2:38), the Old Testament prophetess Deborah (Judges 4), Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28), and Phoebe, described by Paul as a deacon ("diakonos—the same word he used to describe Timothy" and others).

"When Paul used 'diakonos' for Christian workers, we don't know whether he was referring to a formal office or those who, like stewards, had been entrusted by God with the responsibility in the ministry; whether formally installed or not, they were church leaders and ministers," she wrote. So whether Phoebe held the formal office of deacon or was a minister at Cenchreae in a more general sense, she was certainly a church leader whom Paul commended as his co-worker."

Missionary Kids
Supported At OBU

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)—Heads turned at Oklahoma Baptist University when nine "missionary kids" (MKs), less than one percent of OBU's enrollment, earned 19 of the university's top 100 academic and achievement awards this spring.

And a campus organization called "Cousins" made the difficult adjustment from the mission fields to college life easier.

In fact, the Southern Baptist Convention's Woman's Missionary Union offered its highest MK honor in 1984 to an OBU senior. Four years ago, this MK, son of a former missionary to Africa, had been a displaced, maladjusted freshman who couldn't choose a major. He graduated *summa cum laude* in chemistry and biology. He is to enter medical school in the fall with generous scholarships for his achievements.

Credit for improved awareness of Oklahoma MKs and their problems goes to a network of supportive churches and families and to OBU's four-year-old Cousins program, reports its creator, Dick Rader, OBU assistant professor of religion.

"Missionaries' children are flexible," Rader said. Adjusting to life in America is complicated for them, but eventually they become assimilated. When they overcome their frustrations, they almost always emerge as the most tolerant, concerned and best educated citizens."

As a former missionary to Africa and the father of five sons, Rader understands the sometimes troubled adjustment of MKs. Part of the reason he formed Cousins was to assist his sons' settling in America.

The previously mentioned "displaced" freshman who recently graduated from OBU with honors is Rader's 21-year-old son, Mike. The younger Rader also earned the American Institute of Chemists Student Award and the Joseph Aaron Trent Medical Award, both presented for leadership and potential in science and medicine.

Another high-scoring MK is Andy Hogue, 19, recipient of OBU's Grady Deaton Award, given to a rising junior who ranks third in his class.

For Hogue, Cousins met a social need, he said. Like most MKs, he wasn't looking for fanfare. Cousins' no-hype gatherings "have been enjoyable associations."

"The informality of the Cousins program is its strong point," Hogue said. "None of the answers that MKs are looking for come easily. They need understanding. That is enough."

Hogue is the son of missionaries in Taipei, Taiwan. He grew up among Chinese-speaking Tai people, left the United States at age two, and returned as a high school junior.

His first responses to American culture were unhappy ones. "I tended to be cynical toward social groups," he said. "They seemed cosmetic."

Cousins is unlike most college organizations. Members aren't selected. Every son or daughter of missionaries automatically is considered a member. Meetings are few and brief because the program is not designed to clutter the students' schedules.

The meetings--two annual camping retreats and monthly birthday parties--become "points of reference" for MKs, Rader explained. Members want to become assimilated by American society, yet they appreciate others who identify with their frustrations.

Naming the group "Cousins" was natural since MKs are taught from a young age to refer to the parents of other MKs as "aunts" and "uncles."

Sometimes disturbed by materialism in American culture and church s, many of the MKs say their opinions can make them feel unwelcome. Their advanced awareness of world issues puts them "on stage" around peers.

"When we get together as cousins, we usually don't talk about our travel experiences," said one MK. "We get together to not talk about it. The members have a common bond. You don't have to explain yourself."

Yet, privacy is not the desired goal of most MKs. Like their parents, most feel a compelling mission to tell others about Jesus Christ.

"Cousins is a good support group," another MK added, "but a variety of social contacts is best."

Part of the ministry is designed to increase an MK's awareness of belonging in a community which may be thousands of miles from his parents. Christmas and other holidays sometimes are lonely, but churches and WMU groups frequently offer housing and meals to MKs, Rader reported.

Other MKs receiving awards at OBU included: Charlie Bethea, a junior in English, the son of former missionaries to East Africa;

Hope Dyer, a junior in elementary education, the daughter of home missionaries in Hartwick, N.Y.;

Don'G Houle, a May honors graduate in biology, and daughter of missionaries to Paraguay;

Gerald Morris, an English major, who had the top academic ranking in the junior class, the son of missionaries to Singapore;

Phillip R. Odle, nursing, the son of former missionaries to Yemen;

Teresa Rowland, a May graduate in Spanish and sociology, the daughter of missionaries to Columbia, and

Sharon Westmoreland, a freshman in music, the daughter of missionaries to South Africa.

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Missionary Paralysis Victim
To Return to Field Aug. 5

Baptist Press
7/10/84

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary struck down in January by a temporarily paralyzing disease expects to return to Bangladesh Aug. 5.

Randy Rains says he now has about 80 to 85 percent of his normal strength--six months after excruciating pain and almost total paralysis from the chest down put him flat on his back in serious condition.

Rains, a Tennessee native, struggled more than six weeks learning to regain control of his muscles to perform the most simple tasks, such as walking, dressing and eating. The disease, Guillain-Barre syndrome, caused a condition that blocked messages flowing from the brain to the body.

"I feel pretty good now," said Rains, 30, who has been speaking in churches during the past couple of months. "I can function normally under almost all circumstances."

Rains, his wife, Betty, of Birmingham, Ala., and their three children had been in Bangladesh less than a month when he collapsed while climbing stairs. He was treated for a slipped disc, but three days later was lying in a Dhaka, Bangladesh, clinic partially paralyzed. He was flown home Jan. 24 on a stretcher in the back of a commercial airliner.

He and Betty will begin language studies immediately after settling back into life in Bangladesh. They will attend classroom sessions for a year, and, like other full-time language students, will be assigned no other major responsibilities. After language study he will be a general evangelist.

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A former pastor in Indiana and Kentucky, Rains was told upon arrival to Birmingham's Baptist Medical Center-Princeton that recovery would take from six months to two years. He and his wife set the middle of this summer as their goal to return to Bangladesh. Rains took his first step without a cane three weeks after beginning rehabilitation and proceeded steadily with his recovery.

He says his doctors think he's made good progress. "It's been a pretty quick recovery compared to other Guillain-Barre patients," he says. "They don't say a lot about why they think that's so, other than possibly I was in better-than-average physical shape before it happened.

"But they do attribute a lot of the healing to God. One doctor said something to the effect that God doesn't get enough credit for healing, that people want to think it's doctors or medicine, but with something like this, all the healing that takes place is God's."

The Rainses have several grocery sacks full of cards and letters they have received from across the country. "The encouragement and support from friends as well as people we've never even met--I guess you could call them friends of missions--who have let us know they're behind us, makes the healing process a lot faster."

The volume of mail surprised Rains, he says. "We hear so much about how we, as Southern Baptists, are so divided. But sometimes we don't realize how much we can stand together."

Rains says he's also learned how God uses brokenness to his glory. "Even in brokenness there is a kind of victory," he says. "We have to realize much in life is going to be a struggle. But even in the struggle and broken times, Paul says we are often broken apart but never crushed, often troubled but never in despair."

The Rainses had arrived in Bangladesh Dec. 23, after being appointed foreign missionaries last May. Her father, Padgett C. Cope, is a Southern Baptist pastor in Alabama and a former home missionary to New Jersey.

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Grace, Not Judgment,
Needed In Drug Ministry

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
7/10/84

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Churches hoping to minister effectively to persons affected by alcohol and drug abuse must become instruments of grace rather than judgment, advised a speaker at a Christian Life Commission conference.

Ron D. Sisk, director of program development for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, claimed many persons with serious alcohol problems find more understanding at Alcoholics Anonymous than the church.

"AA is really a non-sectarian way of expressing grace," Sisk explained. "It works because alcoholics find forgiveness there. By contrast the most serious block to effective church ministry to alcoholics is usually the church's failure to find grace. The sad truth is alcoholics do not find forgiveness in our churches. Instead they often find judgment and ostracism."

Throughout the week-long conference, Sisk and other speakers cited statistics to illustrate the need for education and action in response to the drug problem. According to recent surveys, 48 percent of Baptist adults drink. Of those, 16 percent become alcoholics--a larger number than any other major religious group in the country.

"That means that if you have a congregation of 200 adults, 96 drink in some degree at some time," Sisk explained. "Of those 96 people, as many as 15 may become alcoholics." Dozens of other people, he added, will be affected by serious drinking problems in their families.

Churches who want to minister to these persons must separate alcohol education from pastoral care, he emphasized.

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"Baptists should continue to educate for abstinence, but we also need to develop healing ministries for those who have alcohol problems," he said.

He urged pastors and other church leaders to be aware of built-in prejudices which limit their understanding and compassion. He advised them:

--to learn about alcohol and drug abuse and discover the treatment resources in the communities.

--to help the congregation to adopt "in accepting a supportive attitude" to those with alcohol and drug problems and their families.

"We must find a way to change the attitude that alcoholism is the unpardonable sin," he explained. "Our initial drinking choices are a matter of the will, but nobody wants to become an alcoholic."

--to learn basic skills for pastoral care for drug abusers and their families including "intervention" techniques.

--to provide care for the family even if the abuser cannot be helped.

Other issues addressed during the conference included biblical basis for an understanding of the drug abuse problem and social and legislative action related to local liquor option election, drunk driving, alcohol taxes and alcohol advertising on television.

Sisk and J. Emmett Henderson, executive director of the Georgia Council on Moral and Civic Concerns, also urged Southern Baptist churches to focus on prevention education. Church leaders who work with children and youth, they advised, should consider the following action:

--try to ensure that youth leaders in every area of church life are providing "positive, drug-free yet nonjudgmental" role models.

--adopt a long-range plan of youth education, beginning with pre-schoolers.

--develop ongoing programs to strengthen families.

--conduct special education emphasis on prevention of alcohol and drug abuse, offering biblical, practical and factual guidance.

"If we can learn to stop ignoring or oversimplifying the alcohol and drug problems among us, then we find ways to minister to all the victims of this national crisis," Sisk said. "But if we refuse to change some of our attitudes, then I believe we Baptists are going to come under God's judgment for our failure to minister 'to the least of these'."

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Extension Center Director Award
Reflects Nationwide Program

By Lee Holloway

Baptist Press
7/10/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Milton Torres and Robert Wayman could hardly be farther apart geographically. They share common ground, however, as 1984 recipients of the national Seminary Extension Center Director Award.

Torres, a catalytic missionary in Hartford, Conn., conducts classes for Spanish-language Southern Baptist ministers in Massachusetts and Connecticut. On the other side of the nation, veteran California pastor Wayman led a successful Seminary Extension center for twelve years in Long Beach Harbor Association and now heads a center in Sacramento.

"The work of these two men reflects the diversity within the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the nationwide scope of Seminary Extension," said Paul E. Robertson in announcing the awards. Robertson is director of extension center education for the Seminary Extension Department, which has sponsored the recognition annually since 1979.

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"Milton Torres has been working for four years with a relatively small number of students, but most of these are either current or prospective pastors of Spanish-language congregations in the area," Robertson explained. "Eight of the pastors in Long Beach Harbor today are graduates of Bob Wayman's program, including two who have served as moderator of the association. His students have included Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, Koreans—pretty much the same kind of mix as you find among Southern Baptist churches in the area."

Both have taken the lead in setting up theological education classes primarily for persons who have been unable to attend a seminary. They have scheduled one or more courses at least twice a year, using course materials developed by the six Southern Baptist seminaries through their jointly-sponsored Seminary Extension Department, Robertson said.

SED Director Raymond M. Rigdon took note of the areas served by the two extension centers. "It is significant that both Torres and Wayman serve outside the area of traditional Southern Baptist strength," said Rigdon. He pointed out that several previous honorees had been from such states as North Carolina and Texas. "Seminary Extension is proving to be an effective tool for training pastoral and congregational leadership on the cutting edge of Bold Mission Thrust. Torres and Wayman have provided a living demonstration of that fact."

An estimated 400 such centers are in operation across the country every year, involving about 7,000 students in pre-college and college-level study of biblical and ministry-related subjects. Most of these are sponsored locally by a Southern Baptist association, working closely with the SED.

The Seminary Extension Department has served since 1951 as an arm of the seminaries related to the Southern Baptist Convention. It is housed in the SEC Building in Nashville, Tenn., as part of the Seminary External Education Division.

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BSSB-N

Churches Begin Using BTN,
Building Tape Libraries

By Frank W. White

Baptist Press
7/10/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—During BTN's first week with a full broadcast schedule (July 2), some churches reported the Sunday school lesson preparation messages were of the most benefit and time for taping messages was their most immediate problem.

BTN (Baptist Telecommunication Network) is a satellite teaching and training network of the Baptist Sunday School Board with more than 150 churches, associations and state conventions currently receiving seven hours of new programming each week.

Staff members from four churches commented on their first week impressions of BTN. They are Mackie McCollister, minister of education, Harrisburg Baptist Church, Tupelo, Miss.; Randall Babin, minister of education, Emmanuel Baptist Church, White Oak, Texas; Jerry Cleveland, minister of education, First Baptist Church, Donelson, Tenn., and Paul Word rs, pastor, Becks Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.

The Life and Work preparation messages have been helpful for the Wednesday night Sunday school work sessions at Harrisburg Baptist Church, McCollister said. About 15 to 20 Sunday school workers have been viewing the messages and attendance increased from the first week to the second, he said.

Sunday school workers at Emmanuel Baptist Church are learning to adjust to the added 20 minutes to their workers' training sessions, Babin said.

"I've been real pleased with things to this point. It's like a new toy and we are not sure of all the angles for using it yet," Babin said.

Cleveland is anxious for BTN to present Bible Book lesson preparation messages, he said. That series is scheduled to begin in October.

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But, the Life and Work series messages have been a boost to the weekly workers' meetings at Becks Baptist Church, Wonders said. Workers are viewing the taped messages and then discussing the lesson for the following week.

The lesson preparation messages have been of immediate benefit to teachers, but the broadcasts from the convention apparently were useful for larger groups to get an early look at BTN.

About 125 persons attended Wednesday evening services at First Baptist, Donelson, to watch portions of the Southern Baptist Convention. People liked seeing convention activities and developed a better understanding of what happened, Cleveland said.

Viewing the convention activities was exciting, said Jerry Burden, a member of the Donelson church who was elected a trustee to the Sunday School Board during the convention. Watching the convention on BTN "made you feel like you were right there," Burden said.

The amount of material telecast makes it difficult to keep up with taping, according to Babin. "I'm making it a priority because I believe in it," he said.

Babin said his church is seeking a BTN coordinator. While he hopes to get a full-time worker, the church will probably begin with a volunteer, he said.

Each program is listed as airing only twice, Cleveland pointed out. "If you miss it twice, you are out of luck," he said.

Cleveland also plans to have a BTN coordinator who will ease the pressure of taping from him. But for now, "I want to do it myself to see how it goes," he said.

McCollister said BTN messages will become a strong part of his church's program once a tape library is developed.

At Becks Baptist Church, the church council is planning uses for BTN and is excited about it, Wonders said. Leaders plan to schedule messages early on that will have broad appeal to the members, he said.

"Over the summer we want to get them accustomed to BTN so they will be able to use it more easily when we get started in the fall," he said.

Babin said his church plans to use the marriage enrichment messages later and is scheduling missions-related messages for use by the WMU organizations.

"We want to give it many months to evaluate it and see how it will help us," McCollister said.

"Five years from now, we won't know how we ever did without it," he said.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press