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85-5

First Quarter CP
Figures Encouraging

By Craig Bird

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists greeted the first quarter of the 1984-85 fiscal year with record levels of giving to their worldwide mission and education programs.

October-December gifts to the national Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist Convention's voluntary, unified budget, were \$27,949,117. That was 9.58 percent more than the first quarter contributions in 1983-84--an increase of more than \$2.4 million.

The receipts are distributed on a percentage basis approved by messengers to the annual meeting of the SBC to 20 SBC agencies. One-half of all CP contributions go to the Foreign Mission Board, 19.7 percent goes to the Home Mission Board and another 20.6 percent is shared by the six SBC seminaries.

"The on-going--and deepening--faith Southern Baptists evidence in the ministries funded through the Cooperative Program is gratifying," Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said. "Their gifts bridge the emotional response to the spiritual needs of our world and the physical acts to meet those needs.

"Missionaries in more than 100 countries and thousands of students in our seminaries are serving or preparing to serve because these Christians called Southern Baptists put financial feet to their prayers."

The basic operating budget for the national SBC agencies for 1984-85 through the Cooperative Program is \$118 million. Over the past five years first quarter CP receipts have been 22 to 23 percent of the yearly total. The October-December 1984 figure is 23.7 percent of the \$118 million goal.

"By themselves the figures--when you see that they aren't just cold statistics but rather the means to share the message of Jesus Christ with the world--are encouraging," Bennett said. "But the possibilities for growth in the next few years are even more exciting."

The main reason for the excitement, he explained, is Planned Growth In Giving, an ambitious effort to: (1) increase the percentage of giving by individual Southern Baptists to their local church; (2) increase the percentage of giving by local SBC churches to their associations and state conventions, and (3) increase the percentage of giving by state conventions to the national Cooperative Program.

If goals, which have been termed "conservative" by Planned Growth In Giving Director Cecil Ray, are met, by the year 2000 Southern Baptists will be giving \$20 billion a year to support mission and educational work at their church, their association, and their state and national conventions.

Not coincidentally, 2000 AD is the target year for Southern Baptists to complete Bold Mission Thrust--an effort to make sure every living human being on earth has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and had an opportunity to respond to it.

"The goals of Planned Growth In Giving, and the financial needs of our agencies loom so large as to be intimidating," Bennett said. "But compared to the needs of the billions of people on earth who don't know the saving grace of Jesus Christ, they pale into insignificance.

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"If God intends to use Southern Baptists to help reach the world for him--and I am convinced he does--then he intends for us to honor him in our tithes and stewardship and pay the price financially as well as prayerfully, spiritually and physically to witness 'Unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'"

Of the 35 state conventions affiliated with the SBC, 32 gave more through the national Cooperative Program in 1984-85 than in the same period last year--and 17 are more than 10 percent ahead of their 1983-84 pace. Also, 14 state conventions already have given more than \$1 million, three are above the \$2 million mark and one--Texas--gave more than \$4.8 million.

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Carl McIntire School Loses
Licensing Battle With New Jersey

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
1/23/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--A small New Jersey school founded by right-wing radio preacher Carl McIntire lost its final bid to become a degree-granting institution when the U.S. Supreme Court let stand lower rulings upholding state officials' right to license all colleges and universities under their jurisdiction.

Shelton College, of Cape May, N.J., failed to convince the high court the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education violated its free exercise of religion by first reviewing, then canceling the school's ability to grant B.A. degrees. The revocation came after the state agency determined the college was not meeting minimum educational standards.

The 1965 actions were followed by a legal challenge but the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled unanimously in 1967 that the higher education panel properly exercised its authority in the Shelton College dispute.

Following that initial legal skirmish, the college relocated to Cape Canaveral, Fla., where it continued to grant degrees. But in 1979, school officials decided to move the college back to New Jersey and a new round of legal challenges began.

Over the past five years, the case has been the subject of seven separate legal proceedings, in each of which the school has lost its basic contention that the state agency is forbidden by the First Amendment religion clauses to regulate it.

Shelton College attorney, church-state specialist William Bentley Ball, of Harrisburg, Pa., argued in a written appeal to the Supreme Court that because the school is pervasively religious state officials have no jurisdiction over its affairs. He asked the justices to recognize the "irrationality" of what he called the "forced destruction of this institution."

Ball pointed out the new round of court proceedings began in 1979 when the state tried to shut down the school altogether. While state courts agreed the state must allow the school to call itself a "college," advertise itself as such, recruit students, teach its entire curriculum and award credits for individual courses, the higher education panel could forbid it to grant baccalaureate degrees.

In the state's written brief asking the high court not to review the lower decisions, New Jersey Attorney General Irwin I. Kimmelman argued "the issuance of a bachelor's degree is not a religious function or practice" and the state's laws governing colleges have no "coercive impact" on an institution's practice of religion.

He also argued "carving out a religious exception to the State's licensure requirements would effectively destroy" the state legislature's intent to regulate all institutions of higher education in New Jersey.

At least 38 states have laws requiring some form of licensure of degree-granting colleges and universities.

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Among the flamboyant McIntire's many causes through the years have been his persistent attacks on ecumenical and interdenominational organizations, including the World and National Councils of Churches and the Baptist World Alliance. McIntire contends such groups foment the cause of international Communism. He has traveled worldwide conducting demonstrations against such groups during their meetings. (84-620, New Jersey-Philadelphia Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Church v. New Jersey State Board of Higher Education)

In another action, the high court also rejected a child custody dispute involving a father who contended the court awarded custody of his two daughters to their mother because it disapproved of his religion.

Philip Aldous, formerly of Little Falls, N.Y., argued unsuccessfully that his active participation in a fundamentalist, independent Baptist congregation led the judge to award the children instead to his wife, Cathy. New York's highest state court earlier agreed with the judge. (84-728, Aldous v. Aldous)

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ACTS Adds
Long Island

Baptist Press
1/23/85

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Virtually all of the half-million cable TV subscribers on Long Island, N.Y., can see the American Christian Television System as a result of a recent affiliate agreement.

Telicare, a non-profit group which provides programming to six cable TV systems on the island adjacent to New York City, will use ACTS' family and Christian entertainment programs an average of 10 hours a day. This will add 417,000 to the number of homes which can receive ACTS, which now totals about 2.5 million households nationwide or more than 6.5 million potential viewers.

Not only does the Telicare agreement represent more ACTS viewers, it also reinforces the network's commitment to reach people outside the Bible Belt, said Lloyd Hart, ACTS' national cable affiliate manager. "We are now in 25 states, and some of the more important recent gains have been in areas like the Northeast," Hart said.

The largest of the six Long Island cable systems, in Woodbury, N.Y., is the second largest cable system in the country, with 233,000 subscribers. Other systems involved in the agreement are in Brookhaven (44,000 subscribers), Central Islip (94,000), Islip (12,000), Lynbrook (5,000) and Riverhead (29,000).

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Driver's License Case
Argued At High Court

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
1/23/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—A Nebraska woman who refused for reasons of conscience to have her photograph made for a driver's license and the state of Nebraska made their arguments to the U.S. Supreme Court in a case pitting competing governmental and individual interests.

Frances J. Quaring, whose attorney insisted before the high court that allowing her photograph to be made would violate the second of the Ten Commandments ("Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing..."), was denied a driver's license under a Nebraska law requiring the photo.

An assistant attorney general for the state, Ruth Anne E. Galter, told the justices Nebraska had the compelling interest of an instant identification for police checks and financial transactions in passing the 1977 law, one of many such statutes throughout the country.

Insisting that exempting those who refuse on religious grounds to comply would create a huge administrative problem, Galter said the real question is "how much of a burden" was placed on Quaring's free exercise of religion.

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Another concern, according to Galter, is Nebraska's objective of "uniform applicability" of the driver's license law, adding the "risk of prejudice and inconsistency would be very high" without it. Besides assisting law enforcement and financial officers, she said, the law is useful in helping sales clerks refuse to sell alcoholic beverages to underage young people and in gaining entry to certain restricted places.

Pressed repeatedly to explain further how such concerns are of a compelling nature, Galter finally tried to turn the religious argument into the state's favor, declaring it would be unconstitutional "to force the state" to provide for exemptions under the law "solely on religious grounds."

Asked by Justice William H. Rehnquist if providing the religious exemption would not result in other requests for exemptions for "spurious" reasons, Galter quickly agreed, underscoring her argument that a ruling against the Nebraska law would encourage similar challenges to other statutes, including conscientious objection to being assigned a Social Security number.

Galter argued further that the state would not be able to train its personnel at 95 examining stations to make the necessary decisions regarding the validity of such claims.

Quaring's attorney, Thomas C. Lansworth of Des Moines, Iowa, argued his client's free exercise of religion was denied by the law's "no exemption" feature and insisted the real question in the case is whether the state's purposes could be achieved by "less restrictive" means.

Lansworth conceded under questioning by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor that the governmental interest in requiring photos for passports and on unemployment applications is "different" than in the driver's license requirement, but said he suspected Quaring's position in all cases would be the same. Quaring's religious views are "sincerely held," he declared.

Answering Chief Justice Warren E. Burger's query about Quaring's willingness to be photographed by news reporters and television cameramen, Lansworth explained her "distress" over that likelihood "is one reason she is not here today."

Both attorneys were peppered with questions from all eight sitting justices. The ninth justice, Lewis F. Powell Jr., was recovering from prostate surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Although he is expected back on the bench sometime in February, Powell may choose to abstain from the Nebraska case.

But according to high court procedure, he may decide instead to read the transcript of the oral arguments and participate fully in the decision, expected sometime this spring.

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High Court Rejects Church
Property, Tax Disputes

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
1/23/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. Supreme Court has rejected an appeal from disgruntled members of a Catholic parish in San Jose, Calif., over their archbishop's decision to raze their church building and school following a fire.

In a separate action the high court also declined to review the case of a small Minnesota house church denied a property tax exemption.

In the California dispute, members of St. Mary's Church in San Jose brought suit against Archbishop John R. Quinn, after the archdiocese followed a special committee's recommendation to raze the parish buildings following a 1979 arson. The special panel was composed of members of the parish, the archdiocese, local pastors and parochial school personnel, and the Jesuit order which operated St. Mary's. Only the parish representatives voted not to raze the buildings.

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St. Mary's Church dates to 1891 when it was organized as a national parish to serve German-speaking Catholics in San Jose. In making its decision, the special committee noted that such a parish was no longer needed because the German-speaking parishioners had been assimilated into other parishes and because of a growing scarcity of priests and support staff personnel.

After a state court upheld the archbishop's decision to follow the committee's recommendation, the unhappy parishioners asked the nation's high court to review the dispute, arguing that Catholics who want to keep their church property should not be discriminated against by the courts simply because they belong to an hierarchical church.

Courts generally have held that whereas congregational churches may settle their own property disputes, hierarchical churches vest in their leaders the authority to decide such battles. (84-791, Gallaher v. Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Francisco)

In its other Jan. 14 action, the high court let stand rulings by the Minnesota Tax Court and the state Supreme Court rejecting a house-type church's application for exemption from real property taxes in Hennepin County.

The tiny so-called "fundamentalist" congregation, consisting of 11 members, was organized in 1980, when it purchased a house to be used as a residence by the minister and as a meeting place. (84-800, The American Fundamentalist Church v. County of Hennepin)

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Math Professor And Family
Have Sunday School Formula

Baptist Press
1/23/85

HOUSTON (BP)--Bob Sartain, Houston Baptist University associate math professor, has long since solved the formula on how to become a better Christian teacher--attending Sunday school regularly.

Attending "regularly" for Sartain means 34 straight years of perfect attendance--a pretty good record.

His three children and his wife, Jan, have collected a combined total of 34 Sunday School Perfect Attendance medals giving the Sartain family a "grand total" of 68.

Tim, a senior at HBU, will soon receive his 15th medal; Dave, a high school junior, has not missed in 11 years; Melissa, a fifth grader, has five years.

Sartain gives much credit to his wife, "because she has always been the one who sacrificed her attendance when one of the children was sick. Even though she has only 'four' years of perfect attendance, she probably has not missed more than eight or ten times during the years we have been married."

Sartain said one of the real joys of Sunday school attendance has been to see each of his children become Christians and to develop their own Sunday school attendance records.

"Sixty-eight years of Sunday school attendance has many benefits.... The Lord has blessed our family with wonderful health.... You can't be very sick and not miss a Sunday.... When you keep your vows to God, he blesses you beyond all measures."

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Hunger Giving Up For Seventeen Years

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists in 1984 contributed \$7,166,772 to their denomination's program of worldwide hunger relief, shattering the 1983 record by more than a million dollars.

It marked the seventh consecutive year gifts to hunger funds administered by the Southern Baptist Foreign and Home Mission Boards surpassed the previous year's total.

In 1983 total world hunger gifts were \$5,996,000.

The Foreign Mission Board reported receipts of \$6,548,901 for 1984, while the Home Mission Board received \$617,871 for domestic hunger.

The figures do not reflect monies given for hunger which were utilized in local churches, associations and state conventions.

The hunger contributions represent an overall increase of \$1,170,772 or 19.5 percent above the previous record set in 1983. FMB gifts increased \$1,142,865 or 21 percent; HMB giving was up \$27,196 or five percent.

Record giving during November and December, the months following the denomination's observance of World Hunger Day in October, pushed hunger funds at both mission boards beyond the 1983 totals.

At the Foreign Mission Board, receipts for December alone surpassed \$2.4 million. FMB officials also attributed part of the dramatic increase to extensive news coverage of the Ethiopian hunger crisis by the national news media.

At the Home Mission Board, part of the increase in domestic hunger gifts resulted when a few Baptist state conventions during the year implemented the 80/20 division of undesignated hunger gifts suggested by the Southern Baptist Convention (80 percent to overseas hunger relief and 20 percent to domestic hunger relief). Other state conventions have voted to move to the 80/20 plan in 1985.

"These statistics speak eloquently concerning our Southern Baptist compassion for the hungry," said Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, which coordinates awareness and action on hunger issues for the Southern Baptist Convention.

The significant increase in giving, he added, "represents authentic sacrifice on the part of many. I pray our response to this grave moral issue will continue to increase responsibly so as to honor Christ more worthily."

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Baptists Respond To Famine
With Record Relief Gifts

By Mary Jane Welch

Baptist Press
1/23/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Television brought starving Ethiopians to American dinner tables and Southern Baptists responded by giving a record \$7.2 million for overseas hunger and relief during 1984.

Almost half a million of that was designated for hunger relief in Ethiopia. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board allocated \$220,873 for that drought-stricken country during 1984 and expects to use more including gifts still coming in, during 1985.

The board, drawing partially on unspent funds from 1983, sent to Africa almost half of the \$8.5 million it allocated for worldwide hunger and relief in 1984. But it also continued relief and development in other countries where overall conditions are better, but where pockets of people also suffer malnutrition and sometimes starvation, said John Cheyne, the board's senior human needs consultant.

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Southern Baptist giving for hunger and relief was up about four percent during the first 10 months of the year, but giving in November and December, after Baptists became aware of the Ethiopian crisis, pushed gifts for the entire year 18 percent ahead of 1983, said Cheyne. More than \$2.4 million came in during December alone.

Long before television footage of dying children in Ethiopia made the world reach for their pocketbooks, Baptist missionaries in other parts of Africa had been allocated more than \$3 million to help prevent similar conditions from developing in drought-stricken countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) and Zimbabwe.

"We have done some extraordinary things because of the special need," said R. Keith Parks, board president, noting especially a \$1 million grain distribution program in Mali, another African country particularly hard-hit by drought. Missionaries Norman and Beverly Coad had been in the country only a few months when they set up a distribution program that took 5,000 tons of grain to needy parts of the country.

The representative for the U.S. Agency for International Development in Mali called their program the most effective distribution program of that size he'd ever seen, said Cheyne. The Coads mobilized evangelical churches in the country to distribute the grain with less than one-tenth of one percent loss, an unusually low figure for relief programs, said Cheyne.

"Foreign missionaries as long ago as Lottie Moon have been doing things about world hunger," said Parks, but only in recent years have Southern Baptists given missionaries the resources to carry out major relief and development programs. (Lottie Moon, a pioneer missionary to China, shared her own food with the needy Chinese with whom she worked.)

Southern Baptists have developed a missionary system supported by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program which enabled the Foreign Mission Board to spend "100 cents of every dollar" given for relief for just that, Parks said. Missionaries, in place, familiar with the community and area churches, are able to move aid quickly when needed.

Parks said because the Foreign Mission Board is a mission agency, not a relief agency, its first priority must be evangelism that results in churches. "But at the same time, the Christian compassion that causes us to want to evangelize, causes us also to want to minister to people," he said.

Like many other Christians, he has been torn by the appalling need in Africa and has had to ask whether the Foreign Mission Board needs hunger funds more than it needs Lottie Moon or Cooperative Program funds, he said.

"We feel that we must have the support through the Lottie Moon offering to keep the missionaries in place and enable them to minister, but we really believe that the crucial nature of the situation challenges Southern Baptists to give above and beyond their other giving," he said.

He compared the Foreign Mission Board to a church with a crisis in its community. That church can choose to use its staff salaries to respond to the crisis, endangering its whole program, or it can ask members to give over and above regular offerings, helping the needy while preserving the system to help again.

Parks recalls how he and other missionaries in Indonesia tried to help the needy around them from their own pockets in the 1950s and says he is glad Southern Baptists have begun giving so generously for hunger and relief.

Southern Baptists today have more money than they did in the '50s, enabling them to give more, he said. Television and increased travel and volunteer activity also have made Southern Baptists more aware of world needs. But, he added, the Foreign Mission Board has personnel and plans in place to more than absorb the \$7.2 million given in 1984 and much more.

Cheyne said Baptists can be proud of their response to the African famine, but the board must continue to put a priority on development programs that deal with the root causes of hunger. "Better to hear that the starvation never came than that we were able to rush after it happened to see what we could do about it," he said.

He pointed out as an example to the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) feeding program in Woleta, Ethiopia, to which Southern Baptists contributed \$50,000. Seeing conditions in northern Ethiopia, the SIM mission anticipated the same thing in the south. Instead of waiting for it to happen, they immediately set up a feeding program. "Now the little children and women who would be just like the ones we see on TV are well on the road to recovery," he said.

The philosophy of the Foreign Mission Board's human needs program has been to provide a holistic ministry meeting both physical and spiritual needs, he said, and the board has tried to provide it before it is desperately needed. "Sending food in relief is only a band-aid ministry," he said.

"One of the things we have to recognize is the enormity of the problem. We cannot solve the whole world's problems by ourselves," said Cheyne. Instead, the Foreign Mission Board has to choose the things it can do best and those that can be copied by nationals even if the Baptists are no longer there.

Although Africa's situation is the world's worst, Cheyne stressed there are pockets of starvation in places like Bangladesh and Brazil, and the Foreign Mission Board continues to aid them also. During 1984, Brazil had farmers devastated by long-term drought in the north and others devastated by flooding in the south. Southern Baptists helped with a number of hunger and relief projects, such as the massive Living Water project which benefited much of a state in northern Brazil.

And the board has acted in other African countries to prevent the situation from worsening to Ethiopian conditions. "Many people don't know we put \$290,000 worth of relief in Kenya this year," he said. Although Kenya is prosperous by African standards, many sections suffered devastating drought during 1984.

As much as the world has done to help Africa during 1984, Foreign Mission Board missionaries and staffers acknowledge relief aid cannot do as much to wipe out starvation as normal rains would. In January, Parks, joined by Rheubin L. South, chairman-elect of the Southern Baptist Association of State Executive Directors, and J. Everett Sneed, president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, issued a call for Southern Baptists to make 1985 a year of prayer for rain in Africa.

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

RTVC Seeks SBC Approval For
\$12.5 Million Funds Campaign

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press
1/23/85

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—The Radio and Television Commission will ask the SBC Executive Committee to authorize a \$12.5 million fund-raising campaign to finance the ACTS network through fiscal 1986.

Trustees of the commission unanimously approved the request, as well as two other funding recommendations, during their regular meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. Commission President Jimmy R. Allen has asked to present the board's proposal to the Executive Committee when it meets in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 18-20.

"There's no doubt in my mind we can make ACTS the most powerful tool for evangelism this country has ever seen as we strengthen the funding process," Allen said. As an example, he pointed to two new contracts for syndication of ACTS programs totalling \$1.1 million as evidence the network is "on the right track."

The fund-raising campaign would be conducted over a five-year period. In the meantime, the commission would establish a longer-term line of credit to meet capital production expenses for fiscal years 1984-86.

"This campaign will allow us to strengthen our income flows while the network gains momentum over the next two years," Allen said. By then, income from development, advertising, syndication and satellite fees from churches is expected to make ACTS self-sustaining.

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The trustees also authorized a \$1.4 million short-term line of credit to cover short-term obligations. A third funding recommendation authorized the commission to conduct a pre-campaign survey, at a cost not to exceed \$27,800, which would help the commission design the proposed fund-raising effort.

"We are proposing a campaign that will address the longer-term financial needs of the organization," Allen said. "It will encompass all of our development efforts, which will continue as part of the total strategy."

Trustee Chairman John Roberts of Greenville, S.C., said the fund-raising strategy will prepare the commission for the "new day" represented by the ACTS network. "We were funded adequately for our work in the past," he said. "We will be adequately funded at a target point down the road. What we are doing is bridging the gap."

Jack Johnson, trustee from Phoenix, Ariz., also endorsed the plan. "What a tragedy it would be if we did not pursue with all the resources of Southern Baptists the promise of the ACTS network," he said.

Allen said the problems encountered by ACTS stem from the complexities of the cable TV industry and the difficulty of organizing on a grass roots level. But, he added, ACTS has already overcome seemingly impossible barriers.

"We have proven we can produce interesting and competitive programs on a financially sound basis, we can make low-power television work and local programming can be accomplished," he said. "The problems are real, but so are the affirmations."

"The thing we are most in need of is advertising revenue," Allen explained. Like almost all satellite networks, ACTS lacks the household penetration at this point to attract major advertisers.

The network now reaches almost three million homes, Allen said, or about seven million potential viewers, through cable TV and low-power TV stations. But some industry experts say a network must reach 8.5 million homes before it can command the attention of advertisers.

Allen said ACTS, which is adding more than 120,000 cable TV homes each week, will reach that benchmark in the next two years. By then, another three to seven million homes will be added by full-power educational stations being built or planned in Fort Worth; Houston; San Francisco; San Antonio, Texas; Birmingham, Ala., and West Palm Beach, Fla., he said.

In his president's address, Allen said ACTS already is proving to be useful in evangelism. Portions of the recent Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference, carried on ACTS in Texas, made the gospel available to approximately 2.6 million people in the state.

"This first attempt at a state network was successful and can be done in any state," he said. "This is providing a whole new tool for evangelism in the ACTS network."

Allen also noted ACTS' newest program, the live call-in counseling program called "Cope," is providing a direct ministry to people in need. The program receives more than 20 calls each weeknight, and calls have come in from more than 28 states.

Two successful low-power TV stations that recently affiliated with ACTS is further evidence the network has found its place, Allen said. Paul Passink, owner of a station in Concord, Va., which switched to ACTS after carrying adult movies, has been asked to speak at the National Conference on Broadcast Ministries in April, Allen said.

ACTS can help Southern Baptists focus their strength on accomplishing Bold Mission Thrust, "which has slipped from our attention recently," Allen said.

"We need to see this nation touched," he concluded. "We are moving responsibly and creatively to put together the solid strategy that will make that happen."

News Analysis

Inaugural Incident Clue To
Reagan's Church-State Views

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)—An apparently minor and all but unnoticed incident during President Reagan's swearing-in for a second term illustrates the main problem advocates of separation of church and state have with his administration.

While the Chief Justice of the United States read the traditional 39-word oath of office, Reagan repeated the words with his hand placed on a Bible opened to 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

That familiar text long ago became the watchword of the movement known as the Religious Right, the coalition largely put together by fundamentalist preachers recruited to the Reagan team in 1979. It is a movement which likes to take a lion's share of credit for electing Reagan in 1980 and for contributing significantly to his huge landslide last November.

The problem with these preachers'—and the president's—use of the text is that they apply it directly to the United States. Although it was written for ancient Israel—a people chosen as God's own nation—it is transferred with great ease to modern America.

In so doing, leaders of the Religious Right also conveniently overlook the entire thrust of Paul's New Testament conviction that the church—not any nation or political entity—is God's new people, the true heirs of the covenant with Israel.

The image of the United States as God's chosen people is not a new one, of course. For more than a century, dating to the days when many Americans thought of the strapping young giant of a country as a nation of "manifest destiny," preachers and politicians alike have availed themselves of the "new Isreal" imagery. Ronald Reagan is only the latest of the latter to do so.

Nevertheless, the idea remains theologically and biblically bankrupt and potentially dangerous.

It also creates terrible distortions in the church-state field. If one really believes God is America's God, it is easy to understand why the president can lament again and again God has been "expelled" from the nation's public school classrooms. If America is uniquely God's people, why not advocate—as the president does—public money for religious institutions? If the nation is really a church, why not send an ambassador to another church?

Yet this president, whose church-state record is far and away worse than that of any of his 39 predecessors, can still claim to believe in separation of church and state, as do his preacher friends of the Religious Right. But like his, their positions on the critical churchstate issues of the day fly in the face of their claims.

For those who have read American history and understand that the nation's founders deliberately separated the two realms, the best hope over the next four years is that President Reagan will concern himself so much with economic and international issues that he will not too radically alter the delicate arrangement between church and state which has served the nation so well.

Perhaps they can even hold out hope the president will listen to advice from religious leaders other than those of the Religious Right and their distortions of American history. He might listen, for example, to Billy Graham, who five years ago declared: "Now I am grat ful for the heritage of our country, and I am thankful for many of its institutions and ideals, in spite of its many faults. But the kingdom of God is not the same as America, and our nation is subject to the judgment of God just as much as any other nation."

Deported Salvadoran
May Go to Canada

MEXICO CITY (BP)—Miguel Castro Garcia, a Baptist pastor deported from El Salvador last October for alleged leftist subversion, apparently is living with "church friends" near Mexico City and seeking a visa to enter Canada, according to a Swedish embassy official.

Castro was arrested Oct. 28 near his church in San Salvador and charged with having ties to Marxist guerrillas. The pastor later denied the allegations and said he was blindfolded and forced to sign a statement confessing guerrilla connections. He was deported Oct. 30, reportedly headed to exile in Sweden, but he entered Mexico under the auspices of the Swedish embassy in Mexico City.

The Swedes now say Castro is on his own. "I think he is still here in Mexico but we don't have anything to do with him anymore," said a Swedish embassy officer Jan. 3. "I think he's going to Canada.... He is living with some church friends and waiting for his visa to Canada to be ready."

Officials at the Canadian embassy in Mexico refused to comment on Castro's status, however, stating information related to the case is "confidential."

Castro's wife and two children joined him in Mexico in late November, according to Victor Mercado, Latin America director for the American Baptist Board of International Ministries.

Mercado has communicated with the pastor several times since his deportation and said the Salvadoran hoped to enter the United States, where Baptist friends have pledged support for him and his family. Mercado also sent Castro a copy of a cable American Baptist denominational leaders received from U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering in El Salvador indicating Pickering would view "with sympathy" Castro's application to enter the United States.

But Castro has never formally applied for admission to the United States, according to U.S. officials. A U.S. embassy officer in Mexico City said Jan. 3 the embassy had received no direct communication from Castro or the Swedish embassy. "An inquiry was made on his behalf seeking information and that was all," the officer said. "As far as we know, he's supposed to be going to Sweden where he's been granted asylum."

That report was echoed by Yvonne Thayer, an El Salvador desk officer at the U.S. State Department, which was bombarded with appeals on Castro's behalf by religious and human rights groups after the pastor's arrest. "We know people are still very, very interested in the case of Rev. Castro, as are we," Thayer said. "But we just assumed he would be on his way to Sweden, which was the offer he accepted."

Mercado says Castro wants to settle closer to his homeland. But wherever he finally ends up, it's unlikely Castro will return with his family to El Salvador soon. Salvadoran government officials reportedly told Baptist leaders recently they would allow Castro back into the country and would not rearrest him, but they couldn't guarantee his security against attacks by anti-leftist paramilitary groups.

"He (Castro) doesn't want to take that risk at this point," Mercado said.

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EDITOR'S NOTE--This issue of Baptist Press, though dated January 23, 1985, was not mailed until January 25 because of mechanical problems.

Thanks,
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