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92-54

**Family entertainment videos
linked to Mormon church**

By Sarah Zimmerman

ATLANTA (BP)--Videos produced by Family Entertainment Network have direct links to Mormonism and are not appropriate for Christians seeking wholesome entertainment, claim leaders of a Mormon watchdog organization.

Mike Reynolds, director of Utah Missions, Inc., says two of the four owners of Family Entertainment Network are Mormons. Artists for the animated videos as well as screenplay and music writers also have been identified as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) or Mormons.

The LDS church is considered a Christian deviation group by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board interfaith witness department. The church's teachings include the Bible as not complete in its revelation or authority, that people determine their destiny by works and that God the heavenly father was a mortal man before he attained "godhood."

The Family Entertainment Network tapes are sold as sets from the New Testament, Old Testament and "heroes classics." Though the videos are marketed as Christian material, Reynolds said they introduce LDS concepts.

For example, lyrics from one of the videos says Jesus paid for sins as he sweat drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. Reynolds says Mormons teach that Jesus' death at Calvary is not essential for salvation.

Another example is the video's portrayal of Jesus' birth. The video portrays the angel Gabriel telling Mary that her child will be the son of God but it obscures the teaching that Mary was a virgin.

Robert McKay, associate editor of "The Evangel," a newspaper printed by Utah Missions, Inc., has seen two videos from the Family Entertainment Network. He says the videos, titled "The King is Born" and "He is Risen," are "neither high-quality animation, biblically accurate, historically correct nor free of Mormonism."

Family Entertainment Network tapes were sold in some Baptist Book Stores last year but the stores have quit selling the material. The tapes were also sold through television's Family Channel based in Virginia Beach, Va., and in shopping centers around the country.

The tapes also have been criticized by the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith in Atlanta for negative stereotypes of Jews.

EDITORS' NOTE: Mike Creswell, Baptist Press correspondent for Europe, filed the following story after visiting Croatia, which is still battling Serbia for independence in what was once Yugoslavia.

Baptists give aid, hope
in Croatian war zones

By Mike Creswell

MOSCENICA, Croatia (BP)--"The enemy is right over there in those trees," said Daniel Jekic, pointing to a stand of trees about a mile away.

Jekic, a Baptist layman, meant the Yugoslavian army, camped just across the Croatia-Serbia border.

Here at the front lines of the war, March gloom and winter-dead trees give the abandoned town an eerie look. Only camouflage-clad Croatian soldiers are visible, sticking close to sandbagged machine gun nests.

Today the town is quiet, but three artillery shells fell here yesterday. A small Roman Catholic church, hit by a shell, showed a gaping 10-foot hole in its wall. The chill wind chased dust across empty pews.

A nearby Baptist church was luckier; an exploding shell only broke out windows and pocked the outer walls with shrapnel.

Croatia, one of six regions in what was once Yugoslavia, declared its independence in 1991. Some 10,000 people have died in the ensuing war with dominant Serbia.

A shaky cease-fire -- violated by frequent skirmishes -- barely holds as Croatians await the arrival of 14,000 United Nations peacekeeping troops. In the capital city of Zagreb, new Croatian flags fly everywhere. No doubts about their future as a new nation are evident among the people.

Christians, like all other civilians, are caught in the middle. David Ogrizovic, pastor of a Baptist church in Petrinja on the Serbian side of the battle lines, fled the town with his family and 20,000 other citizens when shelling began.

"I have experienced the hell of Petrinja. No one who has not experienced this can really understand it," he said. "Thousands of bullets and artillery shells were flying all over. Street fighting was the most dangerous."

Now a displaced person, Ogrizovic has baptized 11 people in recent days and plans to baptize 20 more soon. "For me this presents a great satisfaction. The Lord is blessing," he said.

War has brought out the best in Baptists here. They have organized relief ministries, pushed ahead in evangelism and distributed Bibles and other Christian literature among refugees. Government sources say about 300,000 refugees crowd Zagreb, swelling its population to well over 1 million people.

Daniel Jekic and other Baptist laymen were at the front lines not as soldiers but as Christian witnesses. As rain began to fall they passed out copies of a Billy Graham book, "Peace With God," to soldiers and spoke of Christian faith amid the horrors of war.

The interdenominational ministry group, Getsemani Mission, were originally intended to use the arts to communicate the gospel. In recent months Getsemani workers have won military approval to minister to refugees right at the edges of the war zone.

In cooperation with the government, they have distributed food to thousands of families, currently 1,000 families twice a month. They have received help from a wide range of Christian and humanitarian groups but need more, said Baptist participant Zeliko Mraz.

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They have not discriminated against Serbs living on the Croatian side of the border. When they visited one Serbian family living near the war zone, the man said his family is afraid they will be killed -- just because they are Serbs.

Getsemani has a weekly radio program and has organized public lectures to present a biblical view of the conflict. "We want to enter the Croatian soul," said Josip Deak, who directs the radio work. "The main point of our ministry now is humanitarian aid but we haven't stopped proclaiming the gospel message," Mraz added.

Back in Zagreb, the one Baptist church in the city is filled to capacity for Sunday services as refugees come to worship and pick up medicine, food or clothing. Pastor Josip Mikulic says the church's ministry program, "My Neighbor," has helped more than 1,000 families.

The ministry works in cooperation with the government and Croatian corporations. A storeroom behind the church building is packed with food and clothing. The Baptists have shipped food to 11 other cities hit by war, including Osijek and Dubrovnik.

Aid has come from a wide range of humanitarian agencies but not much yet from world Baptists other than some help from Canadian Baptists, Mikulic said. "We have gotten more help from the World Council of Churches," he said.

Baptists are reconciled to the breakup of their Yugoslavian national Baptist union, which had 117 churches and missions. Forty-three churches and missions with about 1,000 members are in Croatia.

Baptists in Croatia cannot call or even send letters to fellow Baptists across the war zone. "It's not possible to talk about a Yugoslavian union now," Mikulic said, although he suggested joint work could continue on an unofficial basis.

"The church must become supranational rather than be related to a nationality," one Baptist leader said. "That's one important contribution we have to make."

Meanwhile, Croatian Baptists have started several new efforts. Several Baptists cooperate with Catholics in a Christian Information Service to report on church life to secular media in Croatia and other countries. Baptists believe it will help them win more public recognition and ultimately reach more people with the gospel.

A Baptist publishing house in Zagreb will play a key role in meeting postwar needs. Even Catholic churches and schools now use Baptist literature. One Catholic priest helps distribute it and he uses it to prepare his radio messages.

Peaceful dialogue between small Protestant groups and Roman Catholics is important now, said Peter McKenzie, a Baptist who teaches at an evangelical seminary at Osiec.

Southern Baptist missionary Nela Williams has been working with the Croatian government during recent months to win government approval of Baptist Sunday school teaching. Now, Baptist young people can get school credit for Sunday school studies just as Catholic students do, if churches follow proper registration procedures.

That's a new direction in a heavily Catholic land where Baptists often get overlooked -- and where they have been "more afraid of the Catholics than the communists," according to one Baptist leader.

Baptists also may minister in hospitals and prisons but few workers are available. "The doors are open but we're too small for so many opportunities," Mikulic said.

He and other church leaders -- Protestant and Catholic -- say the wounds of the soul caused by the war will take years of ministry to heal.

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

Pro-life rules to have
desired effect, CLC says

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Bush administration's recently implemented rules preventing federally funded family planning clinics from promoting abortion will have the desired effect even though they could have been stricter, a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission staff member has said.

As expected, new regulations governing the \$150 million Title 10 program prohibit grant recipients from advocating abortion as a family planning method. The rules, however, allow physicians in Title 10 clinics to counsel clients about abortion.

"We would have preferred that doctors also be prohibited from counseling for abortion," said James A. Smith, CLC director of government relations. "However, considering the fact that few doctors do the counseling at these clinics, this may have been a regrettably necessary compromise to win."

About 10 percent of Title 10 clients are seen by physicians, estimated a Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Population Affairs spokesman.

The exclusion of physicians from the regulations was not surprising to most pro-life organizations. Nearing a November showdown in the House of Representatives on the regulations, President Bush issued a memorandum saying the rules would not "prevent a woman from receiving complete medical information about her condition from a physician." Both pro-life and pro-choice forces saw it as an attempt to gain votes by taking away the argument the rules would harm the doctor-patient relationship.

"These guidelines are fully consistent with the president's memorandum," Smith said. "It's important to keep our eyes on the ball. The end result is the same. Planned Parenthood and other clinics which promote abortion as a method of family planning will no longer receive federal tax dollars."

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, which has received \$37 million annually in Title 10 funds, decried the rules.

"The narrow exception for physicians in the guidelines is of no use to millions of low-income women who depend on other medical professionals for their reproductive health care," said David John Andrews, Planned Parenthood's executive vice president.

"Planned Parenthood refuses to be an accomplice with the federal government in this outrageous, politically motivated ploy. Neither our clients' health nor our free speech is for sale," Andrews said.

"Any agency that turns down the funds proves itself more committed to promoting abortion than to providing contraceptives," said Douglas Johnson, National Right to Life Committee legislative director.

While most pro-life groups expected the physicians' exception, others apparently did not and portrayed it as betrayal.

"(President Bush) has revealed just how weak his pro-life commitment really is," said Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue. "We appreciate President Bush's use of his veto in the past but on this occasion he acted foolishly."

A memorandum issued by HHS March 20 says Title 10 grantees "may not counsel, refer or steer clients to abortion. . . . Referrals may be made by Title X projects to full-service health care providers that perform abortions, but not to providers whose principal activity is providing abortion services."

Title 10's purpose "is to provide pre-pregnancy family planning services, not to provide services to pregnant women," the memorandum says.

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The pro-life regulations, established in 1988, were upheld by the Supreme Court last May. Pro-choice forces in Congress sought to circumvent the rules by passing an appropriations bill withholding money to enforce the regulations. President Bush vetoed the measure. In mid-November, the House sustained his veto by 12 votes.

Immediately after the regulations were implemented March 20, a subcommittee hearing on them was scheduled March 30 by House pro-choice leader Henry Waxman, D.-Calif.

"Congress will again attempt to overturn these pro-life regulations," the CLC's Smith said. "We urge Southern Baptists to contact their representative and senators in support of the Title X regulations. Remind them abortion is not a legitimate method of birth control; it shouldn't be promoted at taxpayers' expense."

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Crucial religious cases
before Supreme Court

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
3/27/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court has the opportunity in two cases to clarify its doctrine on religious liberty two years after radically limiting the First Amendment right.

The court heard oral arguments March 25 in a case involving a ban in New York City metropolitan airports on literature distribution and solicitation of contributions by the Hare Krishna sect, a branch of Hinduism. On March 23, the justices announced they had agreed to accept a case in which the city of Hialeah, Fla., has prohibited ceremonial animal sacrifices by practitioners of Santeria, a cultic religion also known as Lukumi.

Church-state authorities said it is important these fringe groups win their cases in order for religious freedom to be experienced by Baptists and other large religious groups.

"We do not defend the religious merits of the practices of either the Krishnas or the Lukumis but we defend the legal principle that government should not prohibit the free exercise of religion -- even false religion," said Michael Whitehead, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission general counsel.

"Baptists believe the best way to combat false religion is by proclaiming true religion, not by having government pass a law against a religious practice," Whitehead said. "Government should stay out of regulating behavior just because it is religious."

Oliver Thomas, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs' general counsel, said, "The thing Baptists have to keep in mind is that we must look beyond the litigants. It is very difficult in (the Hialeah case) for people to see beyond the dead chickens and goats. These are the kinds of parties that end up litigating these kinds of cases.

"If the forum is shut down for Hare Krishnas, it will be shut down for Baptists."

The outcome of both cases will reveal more clearly the direction of the Supreme Court in the area of free exercise of religion after its much-criticized 1990 opinion in *Employment Division v. Smith*. In *Smith*, the court abandoned a long-held test determining when government could restrict religious freedom. The *Smith* decision found government no longer had to prove in most cases it had a "compelling interest" as a reason for limiting free exercise of religion.

In both cases, religious liberty advocates have asked the court to clarify *Smith's* meaning. Church-state expert Edward Gaffney has filed briefs asking the court to reaffirm its condemnation of government hostility toward religion. Government agencies and courts have gone beyond even *Smith* in restricting religious liberty, Gaffney said in both briefs.

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"These cases give the court an opportunity to undo some of the damage done to the free exercise clause by Smith," the CLC's Whitehead said. "The Krishna case also addresses the free speech issue of whether city airports, with all manner of newsstands and stores, is a traditional or designated public forum. If so, then religious speech activities should be treated the same as other kinds of speech activities."

"I don't think the religious liberty community should get its hopes up that the court is going to reverse Smith, although there is always that possibility," the BJC's Thomas said.

"There are two likely possibilities. One is a good possibility, that the court would say even under Smith a municipality cannot single out religion for this kind of discriminatory treatment. Or the court could be looking for an opportunity to drive home just how pervasive the Smith ruling is going to be by saying this is the kind of facially neutral, general law we intended in Smith to put our stamp of approval on."

The CLC and BJC both support a legislative remedy to Smith known as the Religious Freedom of Restoration Act to restore the "compelling interest" test. Hearings on RFRA are expected to be held in late April or May in the House of Representatives but it has yet to be introduced in the Senate.

Much of the interchange among lawyers and justices in the Krishna case (International Society for Krishna Consciousness v. Lee) focused on whether an airport is a public forum. Barry Fisher, lawyer for the sect, said it is. Arthur Berg, lawyer for the airports, argued tract distribution and solicitation are inconsistent with the purpose of the airport and they cause congestion and delays for what is a captive audience.

Jay Sekulow of Christian Advocates Serving Evangelism was hopeful after the arguments.

"The thing I'm encouraged about ... is the court seemed very concerned about banning literature distribution," said Sekulow, who served as co-counsel for the Krishna sect. "That's just not right, regardless of whether it's a public forum or not ... literature distribution is going to be protected, which was really the major goal here, quite frankly."

CASE is handling three cases involving evangelistic tract distribution which will be impacted by the Krishna decision, Sekulow said.

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals held, based on an airport's purpose, solicitation could be banned but literature distribution could not.

The court is expected to announce its opinion in June. Groups signing onto friend-of-the-court briefs asking the court to rule in the sect's favor were the BJC, the National Association of Evangelicals, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Concerned Women for America and the American Civil Liberties Union.

In Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah, the city passed ordinances banning ritual animal sacrifice when Santeria adherents announced plans to open a church. Santeria, which came to the United States from Cuba and has about 60,000 followers in south Florida, includes the sacrifice of chickens, pigeons, goats, sheep and other animals in its rites.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the ordinances on the basis of health risks, harm to animals and zoning restrictions.

The ordinances single out religion for discrimination, which is unconstitutional even under Smith, lawyers for the cult said.

"Hialeah has not made it a crime to kill animals," the lawyers said in their brief. "Rather, Hialeah has made it a crime to sacrifice animals to your God."

The Supreme Court will not hear arguments in Hialeah until the new term begins in October, a Court spokesperson said.

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Project Brotherhood team surveys
needs in Central Asian republics

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
3/27/92

KHABAROVSK, Russia (BP)--An eight-member project assessment team has discovered numerous opportunities in the far east of the Commonwealth of Independent States for involvement by North American Baptists.

"The need is awesome," said team leader Jim Furgerson, director of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission adult division. "Anything we do will relieve the situation."

The team traveled to the former Soviet Union to survey possible ministries for Project Brotherhood, which the Brotherhood Commission is coordinating at the request of the Baptist World Alliance to respond to needs in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The effort is closely tied to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's "Green Alert" for the former Soviet republics. Bill Fudge of Cooperative Services International, Southern Baptists' overseas social service arm, assisted in the team's travels.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union into the Commonwealth of Independent States is fueled by a transition to a free-market economy. This has caused rising prices, putting some basic goods out of reach to many families.

Food is readily available at the Khabarovsk bazaar, which is akin to an American farmers' market, Furgerson said. But for most Russian families in the region, the \$20-\$30 per month salary they receive doesn't keep up with free-market prices.

Preliminary assessment plans call for two containers of food boxes to be distributed through the Khabarovsk Baptist Church. This shipment would contain about 2,000 boxes of basic foodstuffs, each weighing 36 pounds.

Food distribution is a short-term solution to problems faced by people here, Furgerson said. Still, the need is great enough to respond with food boxes.

A long-term need noted by the assessment team involves English teachers who also can lead Bible studies, Furgerson said. "We've discovered an open door with a local college that could lead to the establishment of student work similar to BSU in the United States."

Other needs include training, medical assistance, church buildings and church buses.

There are 28 Baptist churches in the commonwealth's "far east," 13 currently without pastors. At least five pastors are bivocational, another five retired.

Churches in the area are reporting steady growth, with 423 baptisms in 1991, according to Far East Superintendent Gennady Abramov. That is expected to double in 1992, he said. At least 10 new churches need to be built.

Team members have lectured in college and private English-language classes and are discovering deep curiosity about Americans and Christianity.

"An emotional appeal will not work with these people," Furgerson said. "They are a brilliant people with intellectual questions about faith, God and the Bible."

Visiting a class for seamen, the team was asked what happened to Jesus' body after the resurrection. "I'd never been asked that question," Furgerson said.

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"It is the intent that this special focus on the needs and opportunities in the 15 new nations that formerly were the Soviet Union will allow us to compact 10 years' work into one," said Dr. Lewis Myers, director of Green Alert for the Foreign Mission Board. "We also hope this focus will create new levels of cooperation with local Baptists, who are our partners, and lay the foundation for long-term involvement in each locale.

"Certainly, our desire is that part of this involvement would be devoted to helping meet physical and educational needs of people, all within the context of our commitment to share Christ across these vast lands."

The first phase of Project Brotherhood is the distribution of 570 tons of USDA surplus food in Moscow, which is expected to begin in mid-April.

Volunteers interested in Project Brotherhood should contact their state Brotherhood director. Contributions for food and medicine distribution can be made to Project Brotherhood, Brotherhood Commission, SBC, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104 or Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran St., McLean, VA 22101.

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Author cites Christian
disregard of creation

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
3/27/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Christians have largely ignored biblical teachings that emphasize responsible stewardship of the earth, said author and poet Wendell Berry.

Berry, author of more than 25 books and professor of English at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, said there are "discrepancies between biblical instruction and allegedly respectable Christian behavior" that often desecrates natural resources.

"Throughout the 500 years since Columbus first landfall in the Bahamas, the evangelist has walked beside the conqueror and the merchant, too often blandly assuming his cause was the same as theirs," said Berry in an address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "Christian organizations, to this day, remain largely indifferent to the rape and plunder of the world and of its traditional cultures."

Berry, whose writings often address conservation issues, spoke March 24-25 at a conference titled "Poets, Preachers and Politicians: God's Hope for Mother Earth?" sponsored by the seminary's Clarence Jordan Center for Christian Ethical Concerns.

The Bible clearly describes God's love for the world he created, Berry said. "People who quote John 3: 16 as an easy formula for getting to heaven neglect to see the great difficulty implied in the statement that the advent of Christ was made possible by God's love for the world ... as it was and is. Belief in Christ is thus made dependent upon belief in the inherent goodness -- the lovability -- of the world."

People typically overlook the miracles evident in God's creation, Berry noted, adding that those who appreciate the created order "will hardly balk at the turning of the water into wine." That miracle, however, is "very small" when compared with "the continuing miracle by which water with soil and sunlight is turned into grapes," he said.

Berry, who lives on a farm near Port Royal, Ky., stressed the Bible teaches that God, not humans, owns the world. "There is in our human law, undeniably, the concept and right of 'land ownership,'" Berry said. "But this, I think, is merely expedient to safeguard the mutuality of belonging without which there can be no lasting and conserving settlement of human communities." He warned, however, that the right of human ownership can become abusive when used to justify large accumulations of "real estate."

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In another address, Berry said most conservation efforts have focused much attention on major environmental disasters while neglecting widespread abuses that occur on a smaller scale. "But a conservation effort that concentrates only on the extremes of industrial abuse tends to suggest that the only abuses are the extreme ones, when, in fact, the earth is suffering more from many small abuses than from a few large ones," he said.

Conservation efforts must be directed toward both public policy makers and individual citizens, Berry said.

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Louisiana professor planning
to return to Ukraine seminary

By Gary W. Griffith

Baptist Press
3/27/92

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--Southern Baptist professor Nicolai Alexandrenko posted grades for the first 18 students of the new Baptist seminary in Odessa, Ukraine, several weeks ago.

"I gave mostly A's, a few B's and no C's," says Alexandrenko, the seminary's first Bible teacher. "The freshmen knew their Bible because they had no other devotional or religious textbook."

With his duties for the six-month semester complete, Alexandrenko returned home March 16 to Pineville, La. But already the emeritus Louisiana College professor is making plans to return to the Black Sea port city.

"I didn't promise to return to the Odessa seminary but Baptists there expect me back to teach Greek in September," says Alexandrenko, who recently served there through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Cooperative Services International program.

"They say there is no one to teach them but me. In fact, they already gave me a letter of invitation that is necessary to receive a visa to Russia."

Alexandrenko says he has a personal stake in the fledgling seminary, which opened last August, supported by the Baptist World Alliance and Foreign Mission Board.

The school is located in his native country and he had prayed for years religious freedom would come to the former Eastern Bloc countries.

He immigrated to the United States following World War II because he was guilty of the "war crime" of not killing himself when faced with surrender as a Russian soldier. He did not try to contact his family in the Ukraine until the summer of 1990 fearing for their safety.

Unprecedented political changes of the last two years in the former Soviet Union led Alexandrenko to contact his family. Before he began his teaching duties in August 1991, Alexandrenko visited his 75-year-old sister, Natalia, and 65-year-old brother, Vladimir. Seven other brothers and sisters died during his years in America.

Alexandrenko hoped to lead his brother and sister to faith in Jesus Christ. But they did not make that commitment, he says. However, he remains optimistic. "They began to think more about God and religion than they had before. Hopefully, after planting the seed, God will give the increase. Hopefully by the next time I go there will be visible results in my family."

Alexandrenko was able to spend only one day with both his brother and sister, he says. "I'm glad we were able to spend some time together but I was there to teach at the seminary and there was not time for much else."

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Alexandrenko taught introductory Bible courses and New Testament Greek in the seminary's temporary facilities. He was joined by Charles Warner, an Illinois native who taught English and has been involved in independent education mission efforts in Russia. A three-story seminary facility is in the early stages of construction, he says. Currently, John Kiwiet, retired professor of theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, is teaching introductory theology.

Maintaining an intense schedule, Alexandrenko taught five days a week at the seminary and participated in such weekend mission projects as Bible distribution, Sunday school teacher training, evangelistic tours with seminary students, preaching in missions, churches and crusades. "I had no free time. I was all the time doing something," he says.

Following the demise of communism and the communist hardliners' failed coup Aug. 19, 1991, opportunities for witnessing and Bible teaching abound in Eastern Europe, Alexandrenko says.

Baptists previously were forbidden to witness openly, begin churches or hold any religious meeting or activity outside the few government-approved churches, he notes. With such restrictions eliminated, Baptists are sharing their faith on street corners, beginning churches and missions and holding evangelistic rallies in stadiums where only communist rallies and sporting events were allowed just months ago.

The only hindrance to starting new churches is the cost of building materials, he says. Established churches and new missions quickly are outgrowing their buildings and meeting sites but the cost of building materials "skyrocketed" in the last year by 10,000 percent, he notes.

"Baptists have no money to build the new buildings they badly need," he says. Many new churches are meeting in recreation centers or movie theatres.

"Most towns and settlements in Russia have no churches of any kind," Alexandrenko says. In the Odessa region, an area the size of Louisiana, there are not more than 25 churches.

Baptists and other religious groups are being asked to teach Bible classes on elementary, high school and university campuses, he says. "However, requests are so many that there is not enough personnel. Plus there are no textbooks (for Bible classes). But the Bible can be taught in the educational system."

Baptists have been asked to preach and distribute literature in prisons and social work centers such as hospitals, homes for the elderly, children's homes and youth detention centers, Alexandrenko says.

Two weeks ago the professor says he preached in a women's prison in Novosibirsk, Ukraine, with 1,000 inmates. Previous Baptist ministry there resulted in 20 women making professions of faith and requesting baptism.

Alexandrenko reports that at least 100 people made professions of faith through his witnessing and preaching while in the Ukraine. "Those are bona fide conversions of new Christians have been or will be baptized and become church members," he says.

"But there is no telling how many will be converted as God harvests the seed that was planted and bears fruit," he points out. "In fact, a preacher near Odessa (in Zorya, Ukraine) said that after my visit suddenly there was a spiritual revival in their village. During my visit we had five or six professions of faith but later they had 80 people make professions of faith and wait for baptism. So in six months that church has doubled its membership, but I don't take the credit."

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He urges Southern Baptists to visit Baptists in former Eastern Bloc countries to "encourage them they are not alone in this business of reaching people for Jesus Christ" and provide them with more opportunities to share the gospel through visiting Americans.

"If you can go and help train Sunday school teachers, do it. If you can go and take Russian Bibles to give, do it. If you can go and help train the Baptist people how to start new churches, do it. But if you can't, still go," he says.

"There are other religious groups and cults coming into Russia. And it is our responsibility to teach them the right gospel," Alexandrenko says. "If we don't do it, the devil will be there with his gospel, which is not the gospel. As the Apostle Paul used to say, 'They preach another gospel, which is not the gospel.'"

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Annie Armstrong inducted into
Maryland Women's Hall of Fame

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ANNAPOLIS, Maryland (BP)--Annie Armstrong, the first national executive of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, has been inducted posthumously into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame.

The Maryland Women's Hall of Fame is sponsored by the Maryland Commission for Women and the Women Legislators of Maryland. The Hall of Fame honors Maryland women who have made unique and lasting contributions to the economic, political, cultural and social life of the state.

Armstrong held the position of "corresponding secretary" for WMU from 1888 through 1906. Today, the position is called "executive director" and is filled by Dellanna W. O'Brien.

Armstrong was nominated by Vila R. Zverina, WMU director for the Potomac Baptist Association. Willene Pierce, WMU executive director of the Baptist Convention Maryland/Delaware, accepted the award in March on behalf of Armstrong from Maryland Gov. William Donald Schaefer.

Armstrong is one of 40 women recognized since the Hall of Fame was established in 1985. Among those who have been honored are legislators, political and social activists, scientists, educators, writers and spiritual and community leaders.

Guests attending the ceremony included Fran Olivier, WMU president of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware; Aduke Akinola, WMU president of Nigeria and secretary-treasurer of the Baptist World Alliance Women's Department; Catherine Allen, president of the BWA Women's Department; and Dellanna W. O'Brien.

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No easy answers, but hope
for Middle East, prof says

By Mary Wimberley

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Peace in the Middle East is possible but won't come quickly or easily, Charles A. Kimball told Samford University students during a lecture series March 23-25.

"There are no easy answers or simple solutions to peace in the Middle East but there is hope. As a people of faith, we are a people of hope and it is possible to move forward on a difficult path to a more hopeful future," said Kimball, associate professor of religion at Furman University in Greenville, S.C.

Kimball was guest lecturer in this year's Dotson M. Nelson Lectures in Religion and Life at Samford. An internationally recognized expert on the relationship of Christianity and Islam, he was Middle East director for the National Council of Churches 1983-90.

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Speaking on "The Cross and the Crescent: Challenges of Pluralism and Peace in the Middle East," Kimball said a year after the Persian Gulf war is a good time to reflect on what was learned from the conflict.

Even though the sources of conflict were primarily political and economic, religion figured prominently in events framing the situation, said Kimball, whose recent books include "Religion, Politics and Oil: The Volatile Mix in the Middle East" and "Angle of Vision: Christians and the Middle East."

"Many contemporary Muslims believe that political change is both possible and necessary. They argue fervently that Islam can provide a political, religious and economic framework for their society," he said. "A political leader, even one as unsavory as Saddam Hussein who speaks to these issues, rightly or wrongly, and is perceived as standing up to the forces that many people feel are oppressing or preventing change, will get popular support."

Various institutions in the United States, from churches to government, need to "seize the moment" to change the deep bias and misperceptions that exist about Islam. "Major efforts are needed to help correct ... negative stereotypes and encourage cooperation across religious lines." People-to-people and cultural exchange programs can do a lot to demystify and put a human face on the other, he said.

The crisis in the Gulf demonstrated the reality of world interdependence, underscoring the necessity and possibility for broad-based cooperation in addressing regional and global problems. Through its peacekeeping role and relief efforts, the United Nations "became revitalized as an important decision-making, coordinating body for the international community," he said.

"The Gulf crisis provides a clue about the nature of an unrepresentative government and the need for political change throughout the Middle East. The people of the Arab World see dramatic changes taking place all over the world and ask 'Why not us?' They long for freedom and democracy."

The United States, Kimball said, should encourage political change and reform in the Arab world not just ideologically but with political and economic support for the processes of change. Noting that Hussein's use of brutality and chemical warfare had existed before the war, Kimball asked, "Will the resolve to call a halt to tyranny and aggression go beyond lip service when oil is not a central factor in the equation? Positive U.S. leadership requires that our policies and behavior become more consistent with our stated goals and our rhetoric."

Although the world has always been religiously diverse, today's interdependence has given rise to a new awareness of pluralism and diversity, Kimball said. "At the point where most people feel the most deeply attached and concerned, at that point of religion and faith, we find the highest walls of separation." Nowhere, he said, is the need for understanding greater than between Christians and Muslims who comprise about half the world's population. Unfortunately the history of Christian-Islamic relations has been one of mistrust, misunderstanding and mutual antipathy, he said.

The answer, he said, is education. "We can never presuppose that we understand another's religious tradition. The process of learning and understanding our own tradition is an open-ended one. How much more so the study of another's religious tradition?" Misinformation is at the root of problems plaguing Christian-Muslim relations. Although for some people learning about another faith is "threatening," Kimball said that his own study of Islam has led "to a deeper understanding, appreciation and commitment to the life of faith as a Christian."

The long-standing Palestinian-Israeli conflict represents the most destabilizing factor in the Middle East. He cited five related problems causing unrest in the area: history of foreign domination, existing policies of unrepresentative governments, internal dissatisfaction with ruling governments, gross inequity of wealth and resources and unresolved regional conflicts.

Post-war activity in the international community, led by the United States, he said, has given some cause for hope for the future on the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab front.

Elements for a negotiated peace will include "land for peace," a territorial compromise involving Israel's withdrawal from at least some of the land occupied since 1967; some way for parties to exercise self determination; resolution of problems facing refugees and displaced people; and the status of Jerusalem, "the most sticky problem of all the components of the peace process."

Kimball advised the students to become better informed about the Middle East situation. "You don't have to become a Middle East expert to begin to hammer out a position. We need to take more seriously our responsibility as a people of faith and as citizens (of) a government whose actions around the world affect people in ways far more dramatic than those of any other government," he said.

"The people of the Middle East are hurting, suffering. They look to us to behave knowledgeably and responsibly. When we look at something so daunting as peace in the Middle East, we should never underestimate what God is capable of doing through any one of us if we respond in faithfulness."

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Mary Wimberley is a newswriter at Samford University.

Seminary evangelists see
1,140 decisions for Christ

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's 1992 Spring Practicum yielded a harvest of learning and experience for its 141 participants and more than 256 professions of faith and a total of 1,140 decisions.

The practicum, held each year during the Fort Worth seminary's spring break, sends students to lead revivals in areas new to Baptist work. This year the students served 165 churches in 26 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Puerto Rico and England.

"What impressed me the most this year is how many of our students ministered to pastors and pastors' families," said Dan Crawford, associate professor of evangelism and director of the spring practicum.

"As always, there was an overwhelming sense that God was directing the placement (of students)," Crawford said.

David Bailey's assignment in Jefferson, N.Y., turned into a citywide revival involving three churches of different denominations. Bailey said the services lasted over two hours every night, with 40 to 65 in attendance each night.

"I saw people wanting revival so badly that not even denominational differences could stand in the way," he said. "Jefferson County is seeing revival."

Paul Cunningham spent his week in Wrightstown, N.J. Cunningham said the pastor in Wrightstown taught him how to be a pastor. "This pastor taught me how to love people," he said.

Mike Butzberger divided his week between churches in Maryland and West Virginia. For half the week he led a youth revival in Laurel, Md. The remainder of the time he spent in Summit Point, W. Va., in a church-wide revival. Butzberger said he learned God is working "everywhere and he's working in the lives of so many different people."

The Panhandle Baptist Foundation provides approximately half the funding for the spring practicum. The foundation is supported by gifts from Baptist laymen.

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Also during spring break a group of seminary students formed a basketball team and traveled to colleges in Nuevo Laredo, Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua, Mexico, and Alpine, Texas. The team played seven games, six in Mexico, in eight days and finished with a 4-3 record. Coach Mike Barrera said the highlight of the trip was the way his players ministered to each other on the physically grueling trip.

"The attitude that the students had was just beautiful to see," he said. Barrera said that despite the more physical style of international basketball, his players kept their cool.

Barrera said the team accomplished its goal of opening doors to evangelism for the Baptist pastors and missionaries in Mexico while distributing several hundred gospel tracts. "They (pastors and missionaries) had very few entrees into the universities or to the sports personalities," he said.

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Christians must answer to God,
Scottish scholar tells students

By Lydia Murphy

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Christian morality means being "responsible and answerable to God," a Scottish expert on ethics told students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, March 25.

"Our task as human beings is to give a response, to give an answer to God," E. David Cook, a fellow at Oxford University's Green College and lecturer at Regents Park College, told the seminary students.

"If you examine morality across culture down through the ages and across religions, instead of endless variation, you will discover a common core of morality, a very important common core," said Cook, who hosts a radio program on the British Broadcasting Corporation and begins a television show this fall.

That core of morality, he said, includes rules about relationships, sexual behavior, truth-telling in society, the value of the sanctity of life and respect for property.

Those universal standards have been set by God, Cook said. "He has written his law in the hearts and minds of men and women.

"The law is a universal law. It applies everywhere to all people. It's a minimum standard, not a maximum standard. It says, 'Here is a line below which you cannot fall. If you fall below this line, society will itself collapse.'"

Cook said God's law is given to humans through conscience and in the nature of the world. Christians can look to those two as a way of telling men and women how God wants them to live in society.

"Conscience is an indication of God's will -- a direction -- so that we are without excuse. We can appeal to the consciences of men and women in our society.

"But God has also written his law in the nature of the world and in the nature of human beings. There are certain ways of living that are good for people and certain ways of living that are bad.

"If I smoke 40 cigarettes a day and drink three bottles of whiskey a day, it's not good for me because my body was not designed to be abused in that kind of way," Cook said.

How ver, conscience and law are not enough for people, Cook said. So "in the fullness of time God sent his full and final revelation in Jesus."

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"Some people say that all we have to do is imitate Christ. All we have to do is to incarnate his values as if Christianity was a do-it-yourself religion," Cook said. "It's not. It's doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration is required."

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