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**SBC Cooperative Program tops
previous fiscal year's record**

By Herb Hollinger

**Baptist Press
10/1/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention ended the 1995-96 fiscal year with a record \$148,185,076 in Cooperative Program gifts, surpassing by nearly \$2.5 million the record given last year, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

For the SBC's fiscal year, Oct. 1 through Sept. 30, the \$148.2 million total for 1995-96 is 1.68 percent, or \$2,445,587, above last year's record of \$145,739,489.

"Through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists evangelize, send missionaries, plant churches, and educate ministers," Chapman said. "Once again, they have supported these grand efforts in historic style. For the third consecutive year, old giving records have been broken, and new ones established.

"The continued generosity of Southern Baptists bears witness to their resolute commitment to be faithful to carry out the Great Commission. This is a good report on the health of our convention, but more than that, this is good news for a world in need of our faithful witness."

Compared to the 1995-96 SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget of \$141,629,127, the gifts for the past year exceeded the budget by \$6,555,949 or 4.63 percent.

Designated gifts also set a record. For 1995-96, designated gifts totaled \$138,446,505 compared to the previous year's record total of \$132,830,194, an increase of \$5,616,310 or 4.23 percent.

Adding the record Cooperative Program plus designated gifts for the 1995-96 year, Southern Baptists gave nearly \$300 million last year through regular channels for the mission and education enterprise of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Southern Baptists' unflagging support demonstrates that they remain focused on the main thing," Chapman said. "They know what they are about, and are committed to being about it! We are deeply grateful to the dear Lord for the stalwarts who make up our churches, and to the pastors and lay leaders who help them to see the whole world as their field, and to cooperate with their Southern Baptist family in reaching out to it."

For the month of September, Cooperative Program gifts totaled \$12,249,874 compared to September 1995 of \$12,879,687, or a decrease of \$629,812 or 4.89 percent. Designated gifts for the month of September were \$2,244,622 or \$255,473 less than September 1995 of \$2,500,095.

The September CP totals also surpassed the budget requirement for the month, \$11,802,427, by \$447,447 or 3.80 percent.

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Since the budget was surpassed for the year, the allocation of the overage will be distributed according to a SBC-approved method. One-half of the \$6.55 million will be distributed according to the present Cooperative Program Allocation Budget formula. As examples, it means the Foreign Mission Board will receive 50 percent of \$3.27 million, or approximately \$1.64 million in additional CP funds over the budget; the Home Mission Board's portion of the overage will be approximately \$640,000, its regular 19.56 percent share.

Another \$3.27 million will be distributed according to the SBC Capital Needs Budget, which is scheduled over a 10-year period, 1990-91 through 1999-2000, with capital needs funds distributed annually on a percentage basis. Included in the capital needs budget are the six SBC seminaries, the Home Mission Board and the Radio and Television Commission.

The fiscal year-end news means the Foreign Mission Board will have received more than \$72 million through the Cooperative Program for the year plus \$95 million in designated gifts. The Home Mission Board will have received more than \$28 million in CP gifts and \$41 million in designated gifts for the fiscal year.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

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B'nai B'rith targets SBC for protest/funds campaign

By Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
10/1/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--B'nai B'rith has launched a campaign against the Southern Baptist Convention's 1996 resolution on Jewish evangelism and is using the campaign to raise funds.

B'nai B'rith describes itself as "the world's oldest and largest Jewish organization," founded 153 years ago, now with programs in "community service, public affairs and disaster relief," its headquarters in Washington and members in 56 countries.

In a national mailing, B'nai B'rith urges:

1) an attached, form letter-type postcard be sent to SBC offices in Nashville, Tenn., which declares, "The outrageous Southern Baptist Convention resolution advocating an active program of converting Jews to Christianity is both condescending and contemptuous. This profoundly disrespectful action demonstrates a basic lack of respect for Judaism as a sister religion. For men and women of the worldwide Jewish community, Jewish identity is a meaningful and joyous part of who we are. Our Jewish values sustain us today as they have through centuries of persecution. And we are proud of our Jewishness. That is why this organizational decision by the Southern Baptist Convention is so deeply offensive. I strongly urge its immediate repeal."

2) contributions be sent to B'nai B'rith, stating, "We cannot remain silent as Jewish children are singled out for Christian evangelism. Enclosed is my contribution to support B'nai B'rith's national campaign to expose and overturn the SBC resolution: [] \$1000 [] \$500 [] \$100 [] \$50 [] \$25 [] Other \$ _____ ... "

The letter detailing the B'nai B'rith campaign, from the organization's international president, Tommy Baer, is on stationery topped with "AIR EXPRESS" and underscored by the word, "URGENT," nine times.

The appeal was mailed to about 100,000 people, said Robin Schwartz-Kreger, B'nai B'rith's director of media relations. She said the organization does not disclose receipts from direct mail pieces.

Several thousand postcards have been received by the SBC Executive Committee and are being answered by Morris H. Chapman, the committee's president and chief executive officer.

Chapman writes: "The Resolution on Jewish Evangelism, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 13, 1996, states that 'We are indebted to the Jewish people, through whom we have received the Scriptures and our Savior, the Messiah of Israel.' I believe it demonstrates respect rather than 'a basic lack of respect for Judaism as a sister religion,' as your communication asserts.

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"The resolution does not suggest or imply that Jewish people should forsake their Jewish identity or their Jewish values," Chapman continues. "The Southern Baptists who adopted it believe, as did the apostle Paul who held his Jewish identity and values in high regard, that 'there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men -- the testimony given in its proper time' (1 Timothy 2:5-6). The apostle Paul also taught 'That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved' (Romans 10:9-10).

"That belief, coupled with love and goodwill for all people, culminates in the earnest desire that our Jewish friends know Jesus as the Messiah," Chapman writes. "The resolution implies no coercion and no rejection, religious or social. It only affirms the communication of New Testament theology that grows out of Old Testament history and prophecy, in which Baptists have been involved for centuries.

"As examples of what can result when Jewish persons embrace Messiah Jesus," Chapman concludes, "I encourage you to take note of numerous congregations of 'Messianic Jews' in the United States and Israel who celebrate their Jewish culture and historic religious rituals as well as their devotion to Messiah Jesus."

Baer, in the B'nai B'rith mailing, described the SBC resolution as "calling for a nationwide effort to convert Jews to Christianity. The SBC backed up their words with money -- funds that will be used to hire missionaries to lead and direct conversion efforts."

Baer added, "At B'nai B'rith, we have a simple message for the Southern Baptist Convention: Leave our children alone."

On June 10, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board directors appointed a couple, Jim and Kathy Sibley, as home missionaries to develop evangelistic ministries among Jews and start churches in predominantly Jewish communities. HMB work with Jewish people began in 1921 when Jacob Gartenhouse was appointed a missionary for Jewish evangelism. While the missionary position was suspended in 1989, work among Jewish people has continued through the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship and dialogue with Jewish leaders.

Phil Roberts, director of the HMB interfaith witness department, said Baer's letter evidences the resolution "has been largely misunderstood and misrepresented by the press and by much of the Jewish community."

"For instance, the word 'conversion' is never used in the resolution, because we don't believe that anyone but God, through the Holy Spirit, has the power or potential to really, biblically convert someone," Roberts said.

"All we're talking about here is evangelism, which is the sharing of our faith in a loving way with those around us, which is an intrinsic part of who we are."

The resolution "grew out of a concern that some people have called for a moratorium on Jewish evangelism," Roberts said, and it was initiated by Sibley and the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship, encompassing about 30 congregations across the country. The resolution's point, Roberts said, is "let's not neglect the Jewish people in our rush to evangelize the rest of the world." From 1867 to 1921, by Sibley's count, the SBC approved 10 resolutions that dealt with Jewish evangelism; in recent years, resolutions condemning anti-Semitism were adopted in 1972 and 1981.

"That people would be shocked that we as Baptists would still be proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the way and means for salvation is commentary on our society and culture, in which everyone believes every other religion is equal to the next one," Roberts said.

"We would certainly not hold that," he continued. "We would hold that the gospel is unique and it does have exclusive claims for itself and that Christ alone is the Savior and atonement for sins, and his resurrection and victory over sin and death are unique events in the history of the world that the world needs to know about.

"Our confessions, our theology, our practice, our biblical foundations call us to that," Roberts said. "And to ask for us to repudiate the resolution is asking us to deny ourselves and our faith in Christ, and that's an impossibility."

"That's not to say the Jewish faith is not of great value," Roberts noted, citing Romans 10 where the apostle Paul, according to Roberts, notes "theirs is the covenant and it was through their lineage the Messiah came; they had the temple and the promises of God, but they still needed Jesus."

Faith in Christ doesn't negate a Jewish believer's heritage, Roberts also maintained. "In fact ... the Christian movement at its beginning was so much an extension and part of the Jewish faith and the fulfillment of its Hebrew scriptures' prophecy that the big issue facing the church was, Can you be a gentile and be a Christian?"

"So, in the best sense, a person can be fully Jewish in our understanding and have faith in Jesus Christ," Roberts said. "They don't deny their ethnicity. They don't deny the true Old Testament faith. They don't deny their heritage. Instead, we believe it's clearly a fulfillment."

Roberts said he believes the SBC resolution has given Southern Baptists "an opportunity to highlight the uniqueness of the gospel" -- and "to platform the crucial issue of why Jews who believe in Jesus are ostracized. You can be a Jew and be a Buddhist or a New Ager or an atheist. No one says, 'Well, you're not a Jew.' But as soon as you believe in Jesus, suddenly you're ostracized, you're a pariah, you're an outcast."

Roberts said he also hopes the resolution will yield "open, meaningful discussion, that we can sensibly and reasonably sit down and say, 'Yes, we do believe this, we still respect you, we love you, we will support you' -- and there are no greater supporters of the Jewish community or Israel than evangelical Christians -- 'and we will defend your right not to believe what we're telling you and to hold any other faith you want to,' because Baptists and Jews have had real affection and commitment to religious liberty.

"I just say to our Jewish friends: Look at the history of Anabaptists. Tens of thousands of them were slaughtered in Europe in the 16th century for standing for religious liberty. We have a heritage, if you will, of suffering and martyrdom as well. We identify clearly with Jewish people. But we do want to share Jesus with them. We're not out to persecute them; we're out to share Christ with them."

The text of the SBC resolution states:

"WHEREAS, Jesus commanded that 'repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem' (Lk. 24:47); and

"WHEREAS, Our evangelistic efforts have largely neglected the Jewish people, both at home and abroad; and

"WHEREAS, We are indebted to the Jewish people, through whom we have received the Scriptures and our Savior, the Messiah of Israel, and 'they are beloved for the sake of the fathers' (Rom. 11:28b); and

"WHEREAS, There has been an organized effort on the part of some either to deny that Jewish people need to come to their Messiah, Jesus, to be saved; or to claim, for whatever reason, that Christians have neither right nor obligation to proclaim the gospel to the Jewish people; and

"WHEREAS, There is evidence of a growing responsiveness among the Jewish people in some areas of our nation and our world; now, therefore,

"BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 11-13, 1996, reaffirm that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16); and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we recommit ourselves to prayer, especially for the salvation of the Jewish people as well as for the salvation of 'every kindred and tongue and people and nation' (Rev. 5:9); and

"BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That we direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people.

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**Colleges begin transition
from Education Commission**

By Tim Fields

**Baptist Press
10/1/96**

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--During a special meeting Sept. 26, members of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) took action to enable the organization to assume some functions of the Southern Baptist Education Commission which is slated for dissolution Dec. 31, 1996, six months earlier than previously scheduled.

Ben Elrod, ASBCS president and president of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas, told association members an agreement had been reached between the officers of the Education Commission and the Southern Baptist Convention's Implementation Task Force to provide \$150,000 over a two-year period to help ASBCS hire a staff and assume some of the functions of the Education Commission, which was established in 1915 to assist the schools. The association is made up of 68 Southern Baptist-related seminaries, colleges, universities, Bible colleges and high school academies.

Under terms of the agreement approved by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Sept. 16, the association will receive \$100,000 during 1997 and \$50,000 during 1998. The funds will come from the Education Commission's 1996-97 budget approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting last June in New Orleans. Early closure and termination of all commission employees and programs by Dec. 31, 1996, instead of June 19, 1997, is expected to fund the grant to ASBCS plus an additional savings of approximately \$200,000 to be redistributed by the SBC Executive Committee.

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The Education Commission will be the first SBC agency to close under the SBC's "Covenant for a New Century" which will reduce 19 SBC agencies to 12.

During the ASBCS meeting, presidents and chief academic officers representing their schools approved without opposition a 500-plus percent increase in dues which is expected to provide as much as \$110,000 for the operation of the association, up from about \$20,000 in recent years. The new membership fee structure is based on the annual budgets of the member schools, with a low of \$500 per year for a \$5 million budget and a high of \$6,000 per year for schools with a budget of \$55 million and above.

Cordell Maddox, chairman of a nine-member ASBCS transition committee and president of Carson-Newman College in Tennessee, charged with recommending actions to prepare the association to stand on its own in the absence of the Education Commission, told members the large increase in dues is necessary to hire a small staff and fund essential programs.

Prior to the vote, Steve Carleton, executive director of the Education Commission and executive secretary/treasurer of the association, told ASBCS members Cooperative Program funding had been providing approximately \$500,000 of the Education Commission's \$600,000 annual budget to finance personnel and programs in support of the schools.

In urging passage of the fee increase, Maddox said, "Our schools have membership in numerous academic organizations and spend thousands of dollars on fees, but no organization is more important to the well-being of our schools than this association."

Association members also approved a revised charter and bylaws and authorized their transition committee "to formulate and approve a budget for the staffing and operation of the ASBCS during a reasonable transition period following the termination of the Education Commission." Maddox said the budget would be subject to available income and would fall somewhere between \$130,000 and \$270,000 a year.

In other action, ASBCS members authorized their transition committee to approve the temporary location of offices for the association for a year or less upon closure of the Education Commission. In a substitute motion, members turned down action which would have approved a permanent location by mail ballot and specified that decision must be made in a regular or special called meeting.

Members also heard reports on ideas for additional funding, including one-time grants from several of the member schools, grants from state Baptist conventions and the possibility of securing grants from private foundations. Members heard reports on a plan to provide association-endorsed student health and accident insurance through a private company which could provide \$140,000 per year to the operating budget of the association based on a 5 percent commission from premiums. That level of funding would require 9,000 students or 10 percent to purchase accident and health insurance through the cooperative plan. Members voted to endorse the plan and promote its use at member schools.

In other discussion, members expressed their desire for the association to work closely with Cooperative Services International Education Consortium (CSIEC) which promotes international education service and sharing opportunities at 47 Southern Baptists colleges and universities. The called meeting of ASBCS was being held in conjunction with the CSIEC annual business session in Mobile. Members suggested in order to conserve operating funds CSIEC staff and programs could be merged under the association umbrella. Dan Grant, president of CSIEC and former Ouachita president, also expressed a desire for the two groups to work closely together, including the possibility of sharing staff and facilities.

At the conclusion of regular business, members went into executive session to discuss operational and personnel matters. Maddox told Baptist Press that during the executive session members authorized the transition committee to ask Carleton to remain as executive secretary and treasurer of ASBCS and to assist with the transition from the Education Commission to the association until a permanent staff could be employed.

"Steve Carleton is executive-secretary for the association until our annual meeting in June of 1997 and we simply asked him to stay on in that position until our board of directors is elected and functioning," Maddox said. "The members asked President Elrod to appoint a nominating committee which will nominate 15 board members who will serve three-year terms," Maddox explained. "The board will be made up of 60 percent presidents of member schools, 15 percent academic deans and the remainder at large."

Maddox said he expected Elrod to appoint the nominating committee soon and the board could be elected by mail ballot even before the mid-year fellowship meeting of the association scheduled in concert with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Dec. 9 meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

"I expect the board once elected to immediately appoint a search committee to find a permanent executive director and recommend a permanent location for the association," Maddox said. "We might even have a called business meeting to act on these issues Dec. 9."

ANALYSIS:

**Teach your children
before it's too late****By Erich Bridges**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--"There is no new thing under the sun," King Solomon wearily wrote almost a millennium before Christ.

But in a keen observation on the capacity of human beings to forget, he added, "There is no remembrance of former things." (Eccles. 1:9-11)

Nearly 30 centuries later, Harry Truman offered a similar perspective: "The only thing new in the world is the history you don't know."

If the historical knowledge of America's schoolchildren is any indication, little has changed. How many kids today can identify Solomon, or Harry Truman? Adults display just as much historical ignorance; many are products of a public school system in decline and a society that lives for the moment.

"The fabric of our way of life is in jeopardy because we are losing our national memory," warns David McCullough, historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of a book about Truman. "We are raising a generation of historically illiterate young Americans." Most high school history teachers "have never really studied history," he states, and 60 percent of their students graduate with "basically no knowledge" of what happened before their living memory.

If we know nothing of the past, McCullough says, we lose our identity. We also become more susceptible to lies and manipulation. Ignorance and evil walk hand in hand.

Is it possible that God's commands could not only be defied but virtually forgotten in two or three generations? It happened in ancient Judah. When the earnest young king, Josiah, discovered and read the lost "book of the law" while repairing the temple in Jerusalem around 622 B.C., he tore his robe in repentance for his people's sins. He also proceeded to eradicate the idol worship and cult practices permeating the land (2 Kings 22-23).

Less than a century before, Josiah's righteous great-grandfather, Hezekiah, had done the same thing with the support of the prophet Isaiah. But the long reign of Hezekiah's wicked son, Manasseh, led the people back into abominations. It also led to Judah's eventual destruction.

Many American Christians look at the state of their nation and see abundant evidence of a similar decline -- and it happened here in less than a generation. Even within evangelical churches, widespread ignorance of the Bible undermines God's work in this and future generations.

It also threatens the future of missions. The Bible is a missionary book, from God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis to Jesus' promise to return quickly in the last chapter of Revelation. But if it isn't preached and taught that way, where will missionaries of the next century come from?

God will find them elsewhere. He already is doing so as churches on one-time mission fields overseas become missionary senders. But it would be a tragedy of monumental proportions if the American church ceases to participate in God's world mission.

Listen to the personal testimonies of Southern Baptists now serving as missionaries. Many who grew up in church say God first drew them toward missions as children. Frequently the divine urging comes through a human channel -- a faithful parent, church mission organization leader, Sunday school teacher, pastor or missionary speaker.

The stories of missionary heroes like Lottie Moon and Buck Bagby, like Bill Wallace and Bertha Smith must be passed from one generation to the next. History, Thomas Carlyle said, is the biography of great men. Missions history is the biography of great missionaries -- ordinary people who attempted great things for God.

In his new book, "A Journey of Faith and Sacrifice: Retracing the Steps of Lottie Moon," Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin writes:

"As a child ... I was captivated by the story of Lottie Moon, told to us along with accounts of contemporary missionaries as if she were still alive. And in a sense she is; her calling and sacrificial commitment continue to inspire hundreds of Southern Baptist missionaries who still follow in her steps." Rankin himself followed Lottie to Asia as a missionary for 23 years.

The current era of mission advance "did not just happen," Rankin reminds. Missionaries of the past, "including many who have given their lives in distant and hostile lands, have laid a magnificent foundation for our era. Because of their obedience to the call, their suffering and their sacrifice, Southern Baptists today serve (worldwide) and report record baptisms and church growth."

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But that tradition could crumble in a generation or less if we don't pass the torch to our children.

We often search desperately for role models for our children. Our children search for them too, sometimes even more desperately. What better models could they find than missionary servants of the past -- and present?

Not long ago I came across a comic book with stories about missionary heroes and heroines -- some of them martyred. I took it home and read it to my 4-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. In one of the illustrated stories, a young man responds to an appeal for missionaries in Korea by exclaiming, "I'll go!"

My daughter took the comic book to her room before bedtime. Later, passing by her room, I heard her say, "I'll go!" I peeked in and saw her studying the pictures in the missionary story.

Age 3 is a bit early for a missionary call, I admit. But could the Lord be whispering to her about days to come?

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Adapted from the July 1996 issue of *The Commission*, the Foreign Mission Board's monthly magazine. (BP) photo (vertical) and cutline mailed Sept. 27 to Baptist state Baptist newspapers by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press and posted on SBCNet News Room.

**Scholar contends Jesus Seminar
represents flawed minority view**

By Douglas C. Estes

**Baptist Press
10/1/96**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--"Biblical scholars" who reduce the historical Jesus to mere legend and myth are driven by a socio-cultural agenda that regards naturalism over deity, said William Lane Craig during the Carver-Barnes Lectures at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Sept. 24-25.

Craig, one of the premier apologists among evangelicals, said the "Jesus Seminar," founded in 1985 by Robert Funk, claims to have uncovered the true story of the historical Jesus while masking their deceptively skewed presuppositions.

According to the Jesus Seminar, Craig said, "the real, historical Jesus turns out to have been a sort of itinerant social critic, the Jewish equivalent of a Greek cynic philosopher. He never claimed to be the Son of God. His crucifixion was an accident of history. As for his death, his corpse probably was thrown into a shallow dirt grave where it either rotted away or was eaten by wild dogs."

If these unconscionable conclusions were true, Craig said, then Jesus would have to have been "crazier than David Koresh and Jim Jones put together."

The Jesus Seminar's conclusions are based on hole-ridden presuppositions, Craig said.

"The number one presupposition of the Jesus Seminar is anti-supernaturalism, or more simply, naturalism," Craig said. "Naturalism is the view that every event in the world has a natural cause. Miracles can't happen."

According to the Jesus Seminar, Craig continued, "the historical Jesus, by definition, must be a purely natural figure. If you presuppose naturalism, then things like the incarnation, the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus go out the window before you even sit down at the table to look at the evidence."

Without an adherence to "naturalism," Craig said, the Jesus Seminar's "quest for the historical Jesus becomes a charade."

"If you begin with the presupposition of naturalism, then of course what you wind up with is a purely naturalistic Jesus," he said. "As long as the existence of God is even possible, then you have to be open to the possibility that he has acted miraculously in the universe," said Craig, who has authored five books and more than 100 articles and reviews.

Defending the Christian faith, he said the Jesus Seminar follows the popular trend "that religion in general and Jesus in particular must be politically correct."

"In our day of religious relativism and pluralism, it is politically incorrect to claim that one religion is absolutely true," Craig said. "All religions have to be equally valid ways to God."

Craig, of Marietta, Ga., said the Jesus Seminar looks to sources outside the Scriptures to support claims that "the Gospels are unreliable unless and until they are proven to be reliable about some particular fact."

The Jesus Seminar attributes only 20 percent of the sayings in the gospels as actually spoken by Jesus, Craig said. "Skeptical critics presuppose that our most primary sources for the life of Jesus are not the Gospels, but writings outside the New Testament."

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The writings cited by the Jesus Seminar are generally the apocryphal gospels, such as the "Gospel of Thomas." This "gospel" is the fifth gospel referred to in the Jesus Seminar's publication called "The Five Gospels," Craig said.

The Gospel of Thomas, Craig said, is a part of a collection of Gnostic documents discovered in Egypt just after World War II.

The arguments of the Jesus Seminar are irrelevant, Craig said, "because the fact is that there is no extra-biblical source which calls into question the portrait of Jesus painted in the Gospels."

Craig, who earned his Ph.D. from the University of Birmingham, England, and his Th.D. from University of Munchen, Germany, said "no modern scholar thinks of the Gospels as bald-faced lies, as the result of some sort of conspiracy."

Quoting numerous New Testament scholars from varied theological persuasions, Craig argued "the Gospels are not only trustworthy documents in general, but as we look at some of the most important aspects of the life of Jesus in the Gospels, like his radical personal claims, his miracles, his trial and crucifixion, and his resurrection from the dead, the historical veracity of the Gospels shines through."

Craig said the church must not be quick to accept the teachings of just everyone calling themselves a "biblical scholar."

"The Jesus Seminar portrays itself to the media as the representative voice of New Testament scholarship today, going over the heads of the clergy to tell unsuspecting laymen who have been duped by the church what Jesus was really like," he said.

"Far from representing the consensus of scholarship, the seminar actually represents the views of a radical minority on the left-wing fringe of biblical scholarship," Craig said. "It is this socio-cultural agenda which drives the Jesus Seminar and determines its conclusions in advance."

But the historical Jesus, Craig said, is exactly who he claims to be in Scripture.

The claims of Jesus, as well as biblical and historical evidence, "tell us that he thought of himself as the exclusive and absolute Son of God and the only revelation of God the Father to mankind," Craig asserted. "It tells us that he thought of himself as God's unique son, distinct from all the prophets, God's final messenger, and even the heir of Israel. This is no mere Jewish peasant."

The Carver-Barnes Lectures, held annually at Southeastern's Wake Forest, N.C., were established in 1961 in honor of the late Baptist historians W.O. Carver and W.W. Barnes. The lecturers are funded by Harold C. Fehner and his late wife, Francine, of Lee's Summit, Mo., and Lee and Reba Beaver of Chesterfield, Mo.

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Evangelist, brother reunite after 44-year separation

By Connie Davis

**Baptist Press
10/1/96**

GLEASON, Tenn. (BP)--Floyd "Lammie" Lammersfeld has seen the 1938 movie, "Boys Town," starring Spencer Tracey and Mickey Rooney, saying it is a good representation of what Father Flanagan's Boys Home in Boys Town, Neb., was like.

He knows because he lived there as a boy.

Lammersfeld, president of the Fellowship of Tennessee Evangelists and a full-time evangelist based in Gleason, Tenn., was placed at the home for boys with one of his brothers after living in several homes for orphans in Chicago.

Their mother had died of cancer at age of 32 and Lammersfeld and his two brothers had been told their father was killed in World War II. Their stepfather did not adopt the boys and did not assume custody. Relatives discussed taking in the boys but said they would have to be separated.

The boys resisted. So the brothers, 11, 13 and 16, were designated as wards of the state.

John Peter, the oldest, soon struck out on his own and joined the Marines. Lammersfeld, the youngest, and Harley eventually were placed at the Boys Home, then known as Boys Town, which was much better than the other orphanages they had lived in. Yet, Harley did not adapt and after several months ran away.

For Lammersfeld, Boys Town was the first place since his mother's death where he felt he belonged. He learned about the Catholic faith there, since the home was sponsored by the Catholic church, and served as an altar boy and completed confirmation.

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After he graduated from high school, he left the home. The first years on his own were difficult, Lammersfeld said. He lived "the rough side of life," he said. He became interested in rock and roll and joined several bands as lead singer, performing in Michigan and Illinois.

But at 21 years of age, he felt restless, he said. When some friends asked him to go with them to Tennessee, he agreed. While there, he visited a revival service at First Baptist Church, Gleason, and "met Jesus as my Savior," Lammersfeld recounted. The year was 1963.

He thought then of his brothers and wondered where they were and if they had such a faith. Soon he felt God calling him to preach. He served as a staff member of three Tennessee churches before resigning to enter full-time evangelism.

As the years passed, he felt an increasing spiritual burden for his brothers, Lammersfeld said. He began to ask people he met at various revival meetings to pray that he would be able to locate them.

Then this past spring he was asked to lead a revival in Chicago, and he began to sense that God was answering his prayers. He hadn't known where to start looking, but God impressed him to look for his brother while there. He went through the Chicago telephone listings, calling each family with the right name and, after calling just three or four families, he discovered he was talking to his brother.

Lammersfeld knew his brother had planned to change his last name to their mother's maiden name, Bakajan.

It was May 24, Lammersfeld said. It had been 44 years since they had spoken. They spent a few minutes trying to get reacquainted, learning basic facts about each other. Bakajan admitted he had located Lammersfeld several years ago and had called, leaving a recorded message. Lammersfeld never received it. And Bakajan never tried again, taking the lack of response as a sign his brother didn't want a relationship with him.

Lammersfeld asked Bakajan and his wife, Grace, to attend one of the services at Fellowship Baptist Church in South Chicago Heights. The couple agreed, although they were Catholic.

That afternoon, three hours before the service, Lammersfeld stepped out of his camper on the church parking lot and saw a couple sitting in a car. The two brothers recognized each other and soon were embracing.

That evening, Lammersfeld preached "like I always do," he said, but he was praying for his brother and his wife since he felt they had not made a profession of faith. And Lammersfeld's wife, Carolyn, who was sitting with the couple, was doing the same.

At the end of the service, when Lammersfeld asked if anyone had prayed the sinner's prayer he had led, Peter and Grace raised their hands. They were the first two people to move to the front of the church.

"They knelt alongside me," Lammersfeld said.

When he questioned them about their understanding, they said they were sure they had just met Jesus. With great joy, the two brothers continued their visit after the service.

Lammersfeld learned Bakajan had been hesitant about trying to contact him because he thought he should have tried to support his two younger brothers. Instead, he had run away from the home in which the brothers had been placed. He thought his siblings were angry with him.

Lammersfeld assured his older brother he was not angry and was even glad because "if you hadn't done that, I wouldn't be where I am today." He explained to him that when a person becomes a Christian, nothing in the past matters.

They parted only after making some plans. The Bakajans planned to visit their newly found family in Tennessee. They hugged goodbye and the brothers walked away from each other. "Then he (Peter) came all the way back to say goodbye one more time," Lammersfeld said.

Now Lammersfeld is looking for Harley Bakajan, his middle brother. Harley is the only other member of his immediate family still alive. The brothers' father was not killed in the war, as their mother told them, but he had since died, Lammersfeld learned from Bakajan, without ever meeting his sons as adults.

The search for Harley will be harder, Lammersfeld said. Harley is currently not in touch with any family members, according to Bakajan. But Lammersfeld said he is not going to give up because he believes in prayer.

The reunion with Bakajan has strengthened his belief in prayer, Lammersfeld said. "God still answers prayer. Whether it's in a day, or a year, or 44 years, he answers prayer."

He wants Harley to experience a faith that can make "a nobody become a somebody. It doesn't matter how down and unimportant you are, God saves people. It doesn't matter if nobody knows your name, because he (God) knows your name," Lammersfeld said.

**Tapping people's skills described
as cure for many church maladies**

By Marv Knox

AUSTIN, Texas (BP)--Christian fulfillment and church effectiveness result when church members discover their God-given talents and get to work, according to speakers at a lay-ministry forum.

Leadership Network, a church leadership training organization based in Tyler, sponsored the September forum in Austin, Texas. It attracted more than 400 participants from churches throughout the Midwest and Southwest and across the denominational spectrum.

Unfortunately, churches across that spectrum suffer a common range of maladies, said Sue Mallory, director of Leadership Network's leadership training and a former director of lay ministry at Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles.

In many of those churches, ministers are "burned out" because they are expected to perform duties beyond their physical endurance, she said. Meanwhile, 90 percent of church members are doing little or nothing to help their churches achieve their goals and minister in their communities.

"We believe in the priesthood of the believer -- that every Christian is a minister," Mallory said. Therefore, as a matter of Christian stewardship, churches ought to be discovering, cultivating and utilizing the gifts and abilities of their ministers, she said.

That idea is based on the Bible, emphasized Brad Smith, a Leadership Network staff member who specializes in working with churches that mobilize laypeople. Churches need to affirm a "theology of the laity" that recognizes a wide array of skills and attributes, Smith said, noting the apostle Paul said God prepared people with those abilities so that the church might be strengthened.

Effective lay ministry relieves overworked ministers and the minority of lay members who take on multiple church tasks, Smith and Mallory noted.

Lay mobilization "frees pastors and other ministers to do what they were called to do and trained to do," Mallory said. "We expect pastors to be experts at finances, volunteer management, administration and recruitment, when what they were prepared to do is preach and teach."

"A lot of what we call 'lay empowerment' actually is 'clergy empowerment' -- enabling them to better equip laypeople to do the work of the church," Smith added.

Conventional wisdom to the contrary, helping laypeople discover their spiritual gifts and use them actually simplifies their lives, Smith said.

Churches often "fill the slots" when the time comes to recruit staff for their Bible study, missions and other programs, he explained. Consequently, people are goaded into taking church jobs for which they are ill-equipped or unprepared. This leaves them miserable, and they often do poor jobs because they are frustrated and/or incompetent to do the task, he said.

But when churches take the time and effort to help members discover their skills and find places of service that draw upon those abilities, the ministries flourish and the members bloom, he said.

Smith compared a healthy lay ministry to a xeriscape garden, which utilizes only plants that are native to the region. Xeriscape gardens need attention, but they look beautiful and perform well, because they are well-suited for the soil and climate. Similarly, churches that enable laity to use their natural skills tend to be healthy, productive and suited to withstand the rigors of the things that happen to them, he said.

Effective lay ministry also helps churches thrive in environments that can be hostile to Christianity and the church, he said. That's largely because fulfilled, effective laypeople naturally share the gospel with friends, neighbors and colleagues -- leading them to faith in Christ through one-on-one relationships, he said.

And lay ministry can help "close the back door" for churches, Smith said.

Many churches fail to involve new members in the life of the congregation, he said. "Once they become a member, there's nothing left -- no next step." But by helping new members determine and use their gifts, churches also bring them into deeper relationship with the congregation, ensuring longer-term involvement.

Three critical elements must be in place for a congregation to build team ministry between laypeople and clergy, Smith said.

"The program must have the support of the pastor and top leadership," he said. "The program must be adequately resourced and given church-wide visibility."

The program also needs leadership from a person with authority to run a church-wide program, he added. Larger churches should have a full-time lay-ministry director, while the task may be part time in smaller congregations.

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And lay ministry must be a "full system" that extends throughout the church, Smith noted. "It is more than new-members' classes, gift seminars or 'slotting' members into jobs. It involves helping individuals grow through discovering their gifts and learning to serve well."

People should be guided "step-by-step from visitor to empowered ministry," he said. "Volunteer programs are connected with discipleship programs so that people understand how their service affects their Christian growth."

Said Smith: "The key is that (the church) does not see lay mobilization as just another program ... but as an entire new way of doing church."

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**Spiritual gifts interviews
suggested for church members**

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
10/1/96

AUSTIN, Texas (BP)--"Church isn't a spectator sport," Sue Mallory, director of Leadership Network's leadership training, told participants in a lay-ministry forum.

Churches function better when laypeople are equipped to recognize their skills and trained to use them, she said at the forum sponsored by Leadership Network in Austin, Texas, in September.

A key component of lay mobilization is a process in which trained interviewers lead church members to analyze their abilities spiritually, Mallory said.

"The interview enables you to come to know members so that they may serve and be served," she noted.

The interviews uncover valuable information, both about how members can help their church and how the church can meet their needs, she said.

And that's vital, she added: "Forty-three percent of the people leaving churches today do so because their needs are not being met, which is because they are not being asked."

"Gift discovery is for 'whole-life ministry,' not just 'slotting,'" added Brad Smith, a Leadership Network staff member who specializes in working with churches that mobilize laypeople.

In other words, one's spiritual gifts should be seen as impacting her or his entire life, not just a resource to be tapped for a single job at church.

"Gift discovery has a greater purpose than just a more advanced way to assimilate new members and recruit church volunteers," Smith said. "Placement opportunities include church, community and the marketplace."

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**Skill, not dedication, key
to church growth, Warren says**

By Brian Smith

Baptist Press
10/1/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Rick Warren loves pastors. He's one of them -- pastor of Saddleback Community Church in suburban Los Angeles, one of the fastest-growing Southern Baptist churches in the United States. But he doesn't like the message of many pastors' conferences.

"They make it sound like dedication will bring success -- that the problem is that we're just not dedicated enough," Warren said.

Warren's comments came Sept. 20 during a regional church starting/growth conference in Fort Worth, Texas, sponsored by the black church extension division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and held in conjunction with Home Mission Board emphasis week at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The conference attracted more than 100 church leaders from some of the largest African American Southern Baptist churches in the United States.

"It's not just a matter of being dedicated," Warren said. "If dedication was all you needed to grow a church, 90 percent of our churches would be growing."

The Bible says it takes more than dedication to grow a church -- it takes skill, Warren said, noting Ecclesiastes 10:10. "It says if the axe is dull and its edge is unsharpened, more strength is required. The point of that verse is work smarter, not harder."

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"I don't know a more dedicated group of people in America than pastors," Warren said. "They love the Lord, they want their churches to grow, they want people to be saved, they want believers to be built up in the faith, they want to send people out in ministry."

The key to growth is learning, he said. "All leaders are learners -- the moment you stop learning you are no longer a leader. I have discovered that everybody is ignorant, just on different subjects. If we get together, we'll both go away sharper."

He said the idea is "the Bible says iron sharpens iron. That's why I like to be with pastors -- it's wise to learn from experience, but it's wiser to learn from the experience of others."

Busy pastors may not think they have time to meet with other pastors, he noted. "But you're never wasting your time when you're sharpening your axe. It's not a matter of being dedicated -- you've got to have the right tools, and that's where it takes learning."

Warren said his ministry has benefited from a wide variety of people, and agreeing with what they've said is not necessary.

"I've learned from people who were succeeding. I've learned from people who were failing. I've learned from Baptists; I've learned from non-Baptists. I've learned from my enemies, I've learned from my critics, I've learned from people I didn't even agree with. I've learned from non-believers," he said.

"If you never stop learning, your ministry will grow. Growing churches require growing pastors -- the moment you stop growing your church stops growing. And you don't have to agree with everything I say -- I don't agree with everything we do at Saddleback. But my philosophy is that it takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. That's why we need diversity."

Warren said the second most important lesson in growing a church is to withstand the impulse to compare one ministry to another. "You can learn from other people, but don't compare yourself to other people."

Comparison breeds sin, he stressed.

"You're always going to find somebody who's doing a better job than you, and you get discouraged," he said. "And you'll always find somebody you're doing a better job than, and you'll get full of pride. Either way, you're dead in the water -- discouragement or pride."

Prior to starting Saddleback, Warren served as a youth minister in an inner-city church. "What I did there would not have worked where I am now, and what I do now would not work there. That's why it takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people, and there's more than one way to grow a church."

He noted God is pleased with a variety of styles in worship.

"God loves to do things in different ways -- sometimes he'll put mud in their eye to heal them, sometimes he'll spit in their eye, sometimes he'll touch them, sometimes he'll just say, 'see.' He didn't use the same formula every time to heal a blind man."

Warren concluded by noting the New Testament mandates the purpose of the church. "We are to worship, to evangelize, to fellowship, to minister and to disciple or nurture. We don't get to change the purpose, but we do get to change the style.

"There are a lot of good things out there, and we can learn from everybody. The competition is not other churches -- the competition is not even other denominations. The competition is the world, the flesh and the devil."

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(BP) photo to accompany this story posted 9/25/96 in SBCNet News Room.

'CrossView' to air
on FamilyNet, ACTS

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
10/1/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The weekly television program "CrossView" began airing in October on both FamilyNet and ACTS, the broadcast and cable television services of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

The program, hosted by Terry Rush and produced by Newcomer-Young Productions for World Radio Gospel Broadcasts of Monroe, La., is carried by FamilyNet on Sundays at 7:30 p.m. Eastern. It is carried by ACTS on the Odyssey Channel on Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. Eastern.

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Darrell Frazier, executive director of World Radio, said "CrossView" was created with two audiences in mind: Christians who are weary and need encouragement and skeptics who are beginning to consider that God may, in fact, be true and real.

"Our land is in desperate need of healing," said Frazier, "the kind that only comes from God. CrossView offers solace without a sermon, a gentle reminder of God's love through the voices of people who have overcome adversity."

Frazier said host Rush is most qualified to speak about pain and ultimate victory through his own personal experiences.

"When his daughter's fiance and his brother were brutally murdered by unknown assailants, Terry's world was shaken to the very core," Frazier said. "His struggle to survive this ordeal and the lessons he learned through it will give you strength, comfort and hope."

Rush has preached for Memorial Drive Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., since 1977. He has authored several books, including "The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense," "God Will Make a Way" and "Afraid God Works, Afraid He Doesn't." He has also produced a video interviewing several celebrities called "High Hope for the Human Heart."

Twice a year Rush plays baseball with former St. Louis Cardinals players, which, he says, has resulted in much teaching, counseling and numerous conversions. In 1992 Upper Deck Baseball Cards invited Rush to play baseball against former stars Reggie Jackson, Bob Gibson, Vida Blue and others on the "Field of Dreams" in Dyersville, Iowa, where he delivered a special "Sermon on the Mound."

In 1994 Rush appeared on the ESPN documentary "Dream Field" and shared how God fulfills the ultimate dream, and how those attending the "Sermon on the Mound" responded to his preaching.

The CrossView program employs a talk-show format with guests who bring viewers inspiring and uplifting testimonies. Most guests appearing on the program are popular Christian authors whose books are featured during the interviews.

"Our program celebrates God's grace and explores real-life situations that may cause lapses in faith," Rush said. "More than anything, CrossView's message calls the viewer to endurance. CrossView is all about hope."

World Radio has been producing radio programs for more than 33 years. CrossView is the ministry's first television venture.

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