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Crusade Results Can't Be Measured, Leaders Observe

by Jim Newton
Written for Baptist Press

With the climatic year of the Crusade of the Americas more than half gone, top leaders of the hemisphere-wide evangelistic effort are searching for ways to evaluate the results so far, and almost all agree it's an impossible assignment.

The effect and results of the Crusade of the Americas cannot be measured, statistically or otherwise--on this almost all those involved in the crusade agree. But almost all also agree that in their opinion, the crusade is a success.

"The results will be known only in eternity," observed Rubens Lopes of Sao Paulo, Brazil, president of the Crusade of the Americas who first proposed the campaign that involves 24 million Baptists in 32 countries of North, Central and South America.

"You cannot measure the crusade by numbers or statistics," said Lopes in a recent interview. "The Crusade of the Americas is not statistics--it is a revolution in our methods of evangelism.

Lopes said that he felt the crusade was especially a "blessing for the little countries, especially those in South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

He used the word "a miracle" to describe the effect on Baptist people and work in such countries as Paraguay, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Jamaica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Peru.

Lopes was reluctant to try to evaluate the crusade's effectiveness in North America, but hinted that he felt the response had been greater in South and Central America. "In the USA, I don't know. But in South America, it is a miracle."

He added, however, that there may never be a way to numerically or statistically test the results of the crusade, because Baptists in South America where results have been greatest do not keep accurate statistics. "In Brazil, people feel allergic to statistics," he quipped, adding that most other South American churches don't believe in statistics and don't turn them in.

While statistics may not ever be available, Lopes and leaders of the crusade in the United States each had firm opinions on the crusade's less tangible effect on Baptist life and work.

Lopes said that the principal result of the crusade has been the integration of Baptist people across racial and denominational and regional lines. He cited especially the way Negro and white Baptists have worked together, and the involvement of different Baptist groups working together on the common task of evangelism.

The crusade also represents Pan American cooperation at its best, Lopes said. Never before have Baptists in different countries felt so much a part of one great movement of God, he said.

The North American coordinator for the crusade, Wayne Dehoney of Louisville, observed that the crusade has become a historical landmark for Baptists, because it has drawn Baptists of 48 different conventions together in a new kind of Baptist ecumenicity.

Dehoney also said that the crusade has brought Baptist leaders from different countries together and provided a forum for cross fertilization and expanded concepts, especially among laymen who attended the laymen's congress in Rio de Janeiro and the laymen's meeting in Nashville recently. It also has provided a hemispheric structure for lay cooperation through the Pan American Union of Baptist Men, Dehoney said.

The Louisville pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church added that while most Baptists in America do not see this, one of the major results of the crusade has been to give encouragement and a feeling of being part of a marching army to the Baptists of smaller countries who have been battling for years to keep their churches going.

Both Lopes and Dehoney seemed to agree that as a result of the "Cali Declaration" adopted by the crusade's coordinating committee in Cali, Colombia, the three-point objective approved for the crusade gave an added depth to most Baptists' understanding of evangelism.

The three objectives as set forth in the Cali Declaration included: (1) deepening the spiritual life within churches, home and individuals (2) evangelizing the continent; and (3) establishing true moral and spiritual bases for the betterment of mankind's economic, social and physical welfare.

Lopes said he felt there had been a good balance between the three objectives, although this had come slowly. Dehoney said there was no way to measure this to know, but he believed Baptists have developed "a more socially conscious pulpit and pew."

Two other top evangelism leaders in the SBC were less sure. "I think we have accomplished something in all three objectives of the crusade, though there are some pockets where there was not much advancement in the third objective," said C. E. Autrey, director of the evangelism division for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta.

He added, however, that he believed that within the next three years, Baptists will have the so-called conflict between evangelism and social concerns licked.

Autrey, who coordinated much of the Southern Baptist Convention's participation in the crusade on the denominational level, said he also felt the crusade helped awaken church membership to more involvement. "So much of our membership is on the sidelines and not active," he said.

John Havlik, associate in the board's evangelism division and chairman of a crusade committee on follow-up, conservation of results, and evaluation, echoed many of the views expressed by the other leaders, but had much stronger words about the third objective.

Havlik said one of the weaknesses of the crusade was the tendency to hedge on the third objective. "This was revealed in the little attention given to it in any meetings of the crusade leaders after the Cali meeting.

Another weakness, Havlik observed, was the failure to communicate to the churches the real significance of the crusade, and to challenge the churches to be creative and innovative in their efforts.

Like the other crusade leaders, Havlik said he felt the greatest contributions of the crusade would not be in the statistical results, but rather in the strengthened relationships between other Baptist bodies in the Western Hemisphere.

Most of the evangelism secretaries of Baptist state conventions in the Southern Baptist Convention, gathered for a recent conference at Glorieta Baptist Assembly, agreed that the biggest result has been victories in Baptist cooperation.

The state evangelism secretaries were also unanimous in reporting the largest percentage of churches in their state cooperating in a crusade since 1955.

They further said they felt that the crusade had helped better human relationships between Baptists of North America, especially in relationships between white and Negro Baptist conventions.

During the Glorieta meeting, the state evangelism secretaries gave examples of inter-racial cooperation between different Baptist groups sponsoring the evangelistic efforts, and told of the effect on the people which could not possibly be measured.

One inter-racial rally held in the wake of rioting in Chicago drew 3,600 people. The crusade involved a high percentage of Negro, Southern and American Baptist churches in the Chicago area.

State by state, the evangelism secretaries told of results they felt would have a lasting effect on Baptists and on society.

But in the final analysis, they were all agreed--the real results are almost impossible to determine and evaluate, either objectively or subjectively.

The committee which Havlik heads will meet, along with the Crusade of the Americas Coordinating Committee, in Leesburg, Fla., April 12-20, 1970, to face this almost impossible task. Lopes said he hopes the group can have an evaluation report to bring to the Baptist World Alliance when it meets in Tokyo, July 12-18, 1970.

Cooperative Program Gifts
Continue 1969 Increase

NASHVILLE (BP)--Contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program continued to increase during the month of July, bringing total gifts through the unified budget to \$16,369,361 for the first seven months of 1969.

The \$16.3 million total is \$1 million more than was contributed during the same period of 1968, or an increase of 6.76 per cent.

In addition to the \$16.3 million in Cooperative Program contributions, Southern Baptists also gave \$20.9 million during the first seven months to designated specific missions causes, mostly foreign and home missions.

The grand total, both designated and Cooperative Program contributions to Southern Baptist causes, was nearly \$37.3 million, up \$1.89 million from grand total gifts for the same period last year. It is an increase of 5.36 per cent in grand total SBC mission gifts.

Of the \$37.3 million total, nearly \$24½ million has gone to support Southern Baptist foreign mission efforts in 70 countries through the SBC Foreign Mission Board.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has received \$8 million to date in both Cooperative Program and designated gifts. Six SBC-owned and operated seminaries have received \$3.1 million.

The Cooperative Program distributes funds, on a convention-adopted budget, to 19 agencies of the convention.

Amounts reflected in the monthly report on Cooperative Program and designated mission gifts prepared by the SBC Executive Committee here do not include funds given to support local and state-wide Baptist mission efforts, but only Southern Baptist Convention programs.

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Wholesale Sales Manager
Named By Sunday School Board

8/6/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--Jimmy D. Edwards, former pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va., has been named manager, wholesale sales department, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board effective Aug. 1.

Edwards replaces W. Alvis Strickland, who returned to the board's Sunday School department as consultant.

A native of Roanoke, Edwards is a graduate of the University of Richmond (Va.) and holds a bachelor of divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

He has also had experience in sales, sales promotion and merchandising with the Humble Oil and Refining Company.

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