

November 25, 1974

**India--Limitless Need
In an Uncertain Time**

74-88

By Ruth Fowler
for Baptist Press

You don't read about famine in India, you experience it. You don't go out on the streets to travel some place, you live on the streets and die there. You don't spend money to mail a letter to the United States, that's a whole day's wages.

The many rich people in India fare well, but a strange curse hangs over about 70 million other people living there. Until the time of Gandhi they were outcaste, without the right to own property, to draw water from the public well or to hear their names spoken by caste persons.

Their legal status has changed, but the attitudes of the centuries linger with them. Some are still forced to live on the streets and search for food on a day-to-day basis.

Over 90 per cent of the 13 million Christians in India are of outcaste origin. Missionary efforts by British, Canadian and various U.S. Baptist groups are largely responsible for building up Baptist strength to 731,000. Southern Baptist efforts began only 12 years ago.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Europe and the Middle East, J.D. Hughey, recently spent four months in India.

"Most of the people in India take religion seriously," he said in a report to the board. "The vast majority are Hindus. Many recognize their need of Christ when they hear of him."

Much has been accomplished by Christian missionaries since William Carey landed in India 181 years ago. The question now is, "how long will missionaries be allowed to stay?"

The government of India is not anti-missionary, as Hughey sees it. Indians enjoy religious liberty by law and in practice. They can worship where and how they please.

However, the Indian government is seeking to reduce the number of missionaries in the country, Hughey said, "as part of a plan for the Indianization of life in all of its aspects."

This means that missionaries will be admitted to India only to do things for which Indians are not yet prepared. But Hughey doesn't think this is an expression of opposition to Christianity.

Southern Baptists are particularly involved in the State of Karnataka, where their efforts will be concentrated at least for the next five years. They have opened a hospital in Bangalore and are now building a student center. Several churches have been established in the Bangalore area. It is hoped that a Baptist convention of Karnataka will be organized soon.

The hospital serves all social and economic classes, including a large amount of free or nearly free service for the desperately poor. The hospital may become a training institution, training interns and offering a residency program.

More Indian doctors and an Indian chaplain are planned for the staff--a voluntary step toward Indianization.

Agriculture, literacy, family planning (also very much stressed by the Indian government), child care, nutrition, health education, curative medicine, evangelism and religious education are or will be features of Baptists' ministry to people in shanty towns and villages of Karnataka.

All churches are being led to self-support. This is especially difficult for churches made up of the very poor people, because educated pastors often find it difficult to live on the same economic and social scale as their members.

Some churches will be served by full time pastors and others will have part-time paid pastors or volunteer lay preacher-pastors.

An important feature of Southern Baptist missionary strategy in India is cooperation. A missionary professor is on loan to Serampore College, which was founded by William Carey, and two more Southern Baptists will probably go to that school.

A guest professor will be sent to United Theological College in Bangalore for the 1975-76 session. A guest professor has been loaned to the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore, and another will probably go there. In January, a Southern Baptist missionary will begin teaching anatomy at Vellore Christian Medical College. Some help has been given on a project basis to Baptist groups outside of Karnataka, and more will be given.

One sixth of the world's people live in India. Its population of 600 million is triple that of South and Central America, double that of North America or Africa.

How long do Southern Baptists really have for missionary work in India? "We don't know," Hughey said. "The acceptance of wonderful opportunities of Christian service and witness now is right, whether missionaries stay in India five years or 500." (BP)

-30-

Rev. Leroy to Stay
Says Flip Wilson

11/25/74

By James Robison
Religion Editor, Chicago Tri

CHICAGO (BP)--Comedian Flip Wilson said he has "no regrets and no apologies" for his character Rev. Leroy, which a group of black Baptists charge is "an insult to God."

"Rev. Leroy (a hip black pastor) was inspired by God," Wilson said in a telephone interview from Los Angeles.

"I'm a very spiritual person and I have a God-given talent to make people laugh. no time does he (Rev. Leroy) not project love, peace, truth and beauty."

Wilson said he would "absolutely in no way" change the character or eliminate it from his act.

This was his first public response to a resolution passed by the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention meeting recently in Knoxville, Tenn. The group represents more than a million clergymen and laymen.

The Baptists charged that Wilson portrayed "the black preacher as a sort of ecclesiastical Stepin Fetchit and the black church as a spiritual rock and roll center."

Wilson said Rev. Leroy "in no way" can be compared to "Stepin Fetchit" because Rev. Leroy is "10 times faster."

He said he draws the line between humor and ridicule "in my feelings. I won't say something that I feel in my heart is degrading."

While he said the character will not be in his next special (Dec 11 on NBC-TV), Wilson said Rev. Leroy will be in future telecasts.

Paul Cooper, Wilson's public relations spokesman, said the comedian has received more than 100 phone calls about the Baptist charges, but nearly all have supported Wilson. He said Wilson has never "had an attack like this before" for any of his characterizations.

-30-

Evangelism Congress

'More People Talking
About Christ,' Graham

By David Daniell and Dan Martin

LAREDO, Tex. (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham told a packed stadium here that more people are talking about Christ than in any other period of history.

Graham preached the closing sermon of the International Baptist Congress of Evangelism held here and in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, just across the U.S.-Mexico border.

The congress was jointly sponsored by the National Baptist Convention of Mexico and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

About 2,000 Spanish-speaking Baptists from the United States, Mexico, Central America and Puerto Rico attended the general sessions, held three days in the Lions Club auditorium in Nuevo Laredo.

The last day, however, Laredo's 11,500-seat Shirley Stadium--generally the scene of high school football contests--was jammed as Laredo schools dismissed classes for the Graham address.

"No one can say they have never heard of Jesus today," said Graham. "The world is headed for war. . .for Armagedon. It is looking for a leader to bring peace. The world is looking for a messiah."

In a pre-address press conference, Graham talked about former President Nixon, crusade evangelism, the economy and morality.

"The Nixon on the tapes is not the Nixon I knew," Graham said. "Something must have happened to him in late 1970 or early 1971. Perhaps the strain of office is too much for any one man."

Graham said he had been a friend of the former president for 24 years, but added he also was close to former Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson.

"I spent at least three times more time with President Johnson than with Nixon," he said.

Graham added: "During the years I knew him, I found Nixon to be open and honest. But then, I am a clergyman and people tend to act differently around clergymen."

"But I still consider him a friend."

Graham, who looked thinner than in past appearances, said he plans "to continue preaching the Gospel for the next 25 years," although he said he finds preaching in large stadiums increasingly fatiguing.

He recently preached to 250,000 persons in a stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the largest in the world.

"I couldn't see a single face," he recalled.

In contrast, he said, he preached to 14,000 people in a meeting in Norfolk Va., and "felt like I was teaching a Sunday School class, it was so small."

Graham added he thinks the prospect of an economic depression--perhaps worse than that of the 1930's--and the threat of war in the mideast might be interpreted as the judgment of God after so many years of abundance which "should have inspired us to be more thankful to God but drove us to be more materialistic."

"All signs indicate Christ is coming soon. . .and if he doesn't come soon, we might just blow ourselves up."

"Even the diplomats at the United Nations are feeling hopeless about the world situation," he said.

Asked about a "post-Watergate" morality, Graham said immorality has not changed since the days of Adam.

"Many of the people who talk about morality today wouldn't accept the 10 Commandments as a basis for morality," he said.

Top Baptist personalities from the United States and Mexico addressed the general sessions of the meeting, the first of its kind ever held.

Fernando de la Mora, promoter of evangelism for the Mexican convention, and Carlos Paredes, associate in the Texas Baptist evangelism division, were co-directors for the effort.

In another first, Mexican Baptists sponsored their first press conference for Nuevo Laredo media.

"The fact that they (the Mexican media) view this congress as important enough to cover is another indication that decades of missionary labors have made an impact for good on the Mexican culture," a Mexican convention spokesman noted.

Among the speakers at the conference were Kenneth Chafin, the pastor of Houston's South Main Baptist Church; James Crane, Southern Baptist representative to Guadalajara; Hugo Ruiz, director of "La Hora Bautista," for the Southern Baptist Radio-TV Commission; Librado Ramos, the associate pastor and Eduardo de la Flor, the pastor of Mexico City's First Baptist Church; Rudy Hernandez, Dallas-based evangelist, and Octavio Gaspar, the pastor of Guadalajara's First Baptist Church.

Paredes said the congress was designed to "examine strategies, methods and the theology of evangelism. . .with the hope participants will return to their homes to tell their friends that Jesus Christ is Lord."

He added: "The great numbers of people who cross our borders daily--amounting to the millions yearly--make it necessary for us to look at the program of evangelism on both sides of the border in order to have some type of conservation program or follow-up."

-30-

David Daniell is media consultant to the National Baptist Convention of Mexico. Dan Martin is press director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Isbell Named President
Of Men's Work Conference

11/25/74

MEMPHIS (BP)--W. J. Isbell Jr., director of the Baptist Men's division of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, was elected president of the North American Conference of Men's Work Secretaries during its annual meeting here.

Isbell succeeds Charles P. Kellogg of the general board of the laity of the United Methodist Church at Evanston, Ill. Isbell had served two years as vice-president and a year as secretary-treasurer before being elected to the presidency of the 14-denomination group.

Another Baptist, W. Burton Andrews of the American Baptist Churches at Valley Forge, Pa., was elected vice-president.

Isbell was host for the two-day meeting, which included an exchange of common problems and possible solutions, and presentations of each denomination's men's work program.

Donald Wismar, a professor at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Ind., gave a series of three addresses on "The Male Identity."

The group agreed to meet in Indianapolis on Oct. 21-22, 1975.

-30-

Widow of Illinois Baptist
Newspaper's Founder Dies

11/25/74

MARION, Ill. (BP)--Funeral services were held here recently for Mrs. W.P. (Kate) Throgmorton. Mrs. Throgmorton, whose late husband founded the Illinois Baptist in 1905, died just a few days short of the 69th anniversary of the paper's founding.

-30-