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80-46

Historic Guatemala Meet
Studies Indian Evangelism

By Leland F. Webb

COBAN, Guatemala (BP)--How do you share the Christian faith with people in the Indian cultures of Latin America without being rejected, tragically misunderstood, or guilty of altering the integrity of an entire people?

To tackle that riddle, more than 30 persons, including Southern Baptist missionaries and national Baptists from 10 countries, got together at a place where the gospel has spread like a spring flood among the indigenous people.

The seminar on work with indigenous people, the first such meeting sponsored by Southern Baptists abroad, convened in Coban, Guatemala, in K'ekchi country. In this area K'ekchi Baptist congregations have grown from 2 to 67 in less than a decade.

The number of people in Latin America who speak an Indian language is considerable—an estimated 30 million. The number of languages and dialects involved runs into the hundreds.

Ted Lindwall, Southern Baptist missionary to Guatemala, reported that the people of the area who speak Indian languages are "divided half and half between Middle America—primarily the countries of Mexico and Guatemala—and South America, primarily in the Andean countries and in Paraguay."

They include such large groupings as the K'ekchi, Quiche, and Cakchiquel Indians in Guatemala; the Aymara and Quechua peoples of Bolivia and Peru; the Mapuche Indians of Chile and Argentina; the Quichuas of Ecuador; the Guarani-speaking people of Paraguay; and such groups in Mexico as the Yucateco, the Nahuatl, the Mazahua peoples and others.

As K'ekchi women in their traditional, brightly embroidered blouses passed the Coban pension (boarding house) where the seminar met, Baptists, who themselves represented a variety of backgrounds, studied cultural and biblical principles of witnessing in other cultures.

Speakers repeatedly emphasized the need to respect and study each separate group of peoples.

Working in an indigenous culture, "The missionary should recognize that his mission is to evangelize and not to change the way of life," cautioned Howard W. Law, academic dean at Simpson College in San Francisco, Calif.

"The way you share the gospel should be appropriate and significant, relevant to the person with whom you are sharing," advised Law, who worked for 17 years among indigenous peoples in Mexico for Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Ebbie C. Smith, associate professor of Christian ethics and missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and a former missionary to Indonesia, said that

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missions in Latin America must recognize the diversity that exists. "The best mission strategy takes each group separately and patterns the gospel so that it can be most easily accepted by that group," he said.

The seminar also examined the need to approach indigenous people in their basic language, even when they are bilingual. In discussing serious and basic matters of life, bilingual people usually revert to their basic language.

"I have the conviction that each person has the right to hear the gospel in his own mother language," declared Missionary Richard Greenwood, one of the Baptist pioneer workers among the K'ekchi people.

To sample a successful approach, participants divided into small groups and visited several different K'ekchi Baptist congregations on Sunday during the seminar. They traveled by car, by Missionary Aviation Fellowship plane, and then on foot to reach churches nestled in the hill country.

"We're asking the Lord for 100,000 people to accept Christ in the next 10 years," Elias Cuc Quim, a K'ekchi pastor and association leader, told the seminar. The churches are aiming at a 50 percent annual growth in both congregations and membership.

The K'ekchi growth has followed basic principles, the missionaries reported. The New Testament in K'ekchi was already available, and Southern Baptists started their work in the K'ekchi language, not in Spanish, reported Wendall C. Parker, missionary who has worked among the K'ekchis for nearly 10 years.

"We tried to use the natural context" of families and friends, Parker added. "We haven't asked for money from the convention or the mission. The churches have been self-supporting from the beginning. Instead of trying to do it all ourselves, we have worked to train K'ekchi leaders."

Participants concluded the meeting by formulating tentative plans for enlarging outreach efforts among indigenous peoples.

"Logic tells us we ought to go toward the urban areas where the population is, but God does not always work according to logic," German B. Nunez, executive secretary of the missions and evangelism board for the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela, told the seminar. "God sent Philip from the city into the desert to evangelize one person," he reminded them.

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Leland Webb, editor of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's magazine, "The Commission," covered this story during a trip to Middle America.

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

Fundamentalist Preacher
Loses Property Tax Fight

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WASHINGTON (BP)—Right-wing radio preacher Carl McIntire lost in a final bid to have his Admiral Hotel in Cape May, N.J., exempted from local property taxes when the Supreme Court declined to take on his appeal.

McIntire, a self-described fundamentalist who has long espoused a variety of right-wing political causes in his radio broadcasts, bought the six-story hotel in 1962 as a Bible conference center. While admitting that outside groups occasionally use the facility on a cost basis, McIntire argued that he was denied equal protection of the law when his application for exemption from real property taxes was denied.

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He claimed that New Jersey law, which says such plants must be used "exclusively" for religious purposes, has been interpreted in other similar cases so as to allow minimal exceptions. Among other outside groups using the facilities from time to time have been the Rotary Club, a WeightWatchers group, and various non-affiliated religious organizations.

New Jersey taxing authorities and two state courts, in ruling against McIntire, pointed out that outside guests as well as participants in the Bible conferences use the Cape May Hotel for vacationing. McIntire maintains that the hotel is a deficit operation.

In his request to the high court, McIntire's attorney pointed out that even the outside groups must agree to abide by a set of strict rules of personal conduct, including no drinking, smoking or dancing, and a dress code.

In addition to conducting the Admiral Hotel Bible Conferences every summer, McIntire is pastor of a fundamentalist Broadway Presbyterian congregation in Collingswood, N.J., and leader of the International Council of Christian Churches, a group which claims 252 fundamentalist denominations in its membership.

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Supreme Court Lets Stand
Non-Union Worker's Firing

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
3/19/80

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case of a North American Rockwell Corp. employee dismissed 10 years ago for refusing to join a union on religious grounds.

Kenneth R. Yott, claiming membership in the "Church That Is Christ's Body," had argued throughout his lengthy legal appeal that one of the principal tenets of his faith is not to affiliate with any group that includes "non-believers."

When a union agreement reached in 1968 required all of the giant aerospace plant's employees to join the union, Yott refused and was dismissed in early 1969. Under previous labor agreements, workers already at the California Rockwell facility had been given the option of joining the union.

Yott's attorney argued in a written statement asking high court review of the case that his client proposed three options to the company, all of which were refused. He was willing to be assigned to a job outside the union agreement's coverage, to be excepted or "grandfathered" from the union security clause, or to be reinstated in his old job at a pay rate equal to that of other employees after payment of union dues.

The only alternative offered by the company, Yott insisted, was that he pay a sum equivalent to the monthly union dues to a charity of his choice, an option he rejected.

The dismissed employee based his case on Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or religion. The law also requires employers to demonstrate that they would be caused "undue hardship" by accommodating workers' religious preferences.

Two lower federal courts ruled earlier that North American Rockwell had demonstrated to their satisfaction that it would suffer such undue hardship in accommodating Yott's demands.

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High Court Strikes Down Texas Obscenity Statute

WASHINGTON (BP)—In the latest of what has become over the past seven years a lengthy series of decisions and other actions on obscenity, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas law which allowed judges to shut down theaters for one year based on their record of showing obscene films.

The narrow 5-4 high court majority ruled that the law amounted to an unacceptable prior restraint on free speech, a First Amendment right.

The Texas statute permitted a court injunction forbidding such theaters to operate for one year under the presumption that they would continue to show obscene films. That presumption of guilt, the high court ruled, is constitutionally invalid.

Citing language first adopted by the court in 1963, the majority declared that "any system of prior restraints of expression comes to this court bearing a heavy presumption against its Constitutional validity."

Since 1973, when the court ruled that localities may determine for themselves what constitutes obscene materials, it has been forced to deal with continuous challenges to state and municipal laws by convicted bookstore and theater owners claiming their free speech rights have been abridged.

The justices have repeatedly refused, however, to reconsider the 1973 decision, preferring to deal with challenges to obscenity laws around the country on a case-by-case basis.

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Baptist Minister Not Guilty In Sex Case

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MADISONVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A jury here acquitted James B. Dotson of all charges that he had homosexual relations with teenagers in 1978 at a private Baptist youth camp he operated.

"God knew I wasn't guilty," the beaming Baptist preacher declared, and family and friends broke into applause. They ran to him and took turns embracing him as they cried.

Chief prosecutor Richard Fisher said the fact that several of the state's teen-age witnesses changed their testimony probably influenced the jury.

"I have faith in the jury system," Fisher said. "Our witnesses, too many of them, just changed their stories. It was tough to expect the jury to accept their testimony."

Defense lawyers had told the jury that the charges resulted from a conspiracy by others to lie about the 56-year-old Dotson and have his 72-acre Tellico Rivers Ministries Camp near Madisonville, Tenn., closed.

Dotson has six children, one of them adopted, and is pastor of the Washburn Street Baptist Church in Knoxville. He was accused of having or attempting homosexual relations in 1978 with James Woodby and Roy Moore, residents of the camp which Dotson ran until his September 1978 arrest.

Gladys Dotson, the minister's wife, and his son, James Jr., testified that Dotson is an affectionate, caring man who has hosted church suppers, organized church activities for the needy and often hugged family members.

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"I submit to you that he's been punished enough," defense lawyer Robert Ritchie told jurors in his closing argument. "He's been subjected to vilification and humiliation before his family and his friends. He will forever, even with acquittal, bear a brand of this trial."

Witness Jerry Lankford, 16, retracted testimony against Dotson and told the court that a lesbian who worked at Dotson's camp and testified for the state had threatened to beat him up if he did not make up things to tell authorities.

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El Salvador Missionaries
Moving With Caution

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SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries in politically troubled El Salvador are acting with caution as they go about their work in the capital city of San Salvador.

"We hope the worst is over, but we have our doubts," said Missionary Bill Stennett in a March 11 letter to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

The Central America country has been in a state of turmoil for more than six months since a coup removed the right-wing government.

Missionaries are moving about with caution during the day, but "night travel is quite dangerous," Stennett said, adding that the Baptist Bookstore and book deposit are "holding their own for the present."

Stennett, who requested prayer for the situation in El Salvador, is from Richmond, Va. His wife is the former Elizabeth Graeff of Washington, D.C. Hoyt and Marie Saddler Eudaly of Pecos, Texas, and Appleton City, Mo., respectively, are also stationed in San Salvador.

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Stetson Students
Turn Off Stereos

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LELAND, Fla. (BP)—While stereos, popcorn poppers and hotplates were idle at Stetson University in a prelude to Earth Day, students at the Southern Baptist school ate by candlelight, held group discussions—and saved their school money.

According to a story in Associated Press, Earth Day enthusiasts arranged the 5½ hour campus blackout as part of the "Countdown to Earth Day." The main event is April 22.

Stetson officials said 390 stereos, 332 refrigerators, 101 popcorn poppers, 216 television sets, 194 ovens and hotplates and 624 hair dryers owned by the residents of 668 dormitory rooms were turned off during the blackout.

Students had candlelit dinners, roasted marshmallows over fires, sang and talked during the blackout.

The school used about 7,000 kilowatt-hours of power less than it averages, saving \$652 on its electric bill, officials said.

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