



BAPTIST PRESS

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Mexico Cancels TV Programs;
Leaves Door Open For Others

MEXICO CITY (BP)--The government of Mexico has canceled broadcasts of two Baptist television programs, citing the Mexican constitution's prohibition of references to God and the Bible on radio and television.

But the government left open the door for continued Baptist programming as long as it falls within government limitations and gains prior approval from the interior department, which regulates broadcasting.

A government official said the two canceled programs--"Circle Three" and the "JOT" cartoon series--violate the constitutional limit, according to Sofia Alarcon, general manager of the National Baptist Convention of Mexico's media department.

"Circle Three" is a 39-part series featuring interviews, music and short evangelistic messages that has been broadcast widely in Latin America. It was produced by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The "JOT" cartoons, produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, communicate Christian values such as honesty, obedience to parents, sharing and forgiveness.

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Baptist Leaders From Five Nations
Plan Global Evangelism Meeting

By Marty Croll

Baptist Pr ss
11/29/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Baptist leaders from five nations have taken a step in what could evolve into a modern-day, cooperative effort among Christians of all cultures to saturate the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Leaders from Brazil, Nigeria, Korea, Jamaica and the United States met Nov. 20 in Richmond, Va., to begin planning a three-day Global Consultation on World Evangelization next summer. The meeting will be held June 26-28 in connection with the Southern Baptist Foreign Missions Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

The meeting could lead to a new level of world cooperation among Baptists, sharing resources such as people, money and visa availability to fulfill a common global strategy.

The consultation will cover various approaches to evangelization, including testimonies of Baptists who have been successful in specific types of evangelism throughout the world. Delegates will decide what to recommend--if anything--in moving toward a cooperative world mission strategy. No recommendation will be binding on the Baptist bodies represented.

"In this time in which we live, there is a global effort in almost every human endeavor," said Jamaican Azariah McKenzie, executive secretary of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. "God's people should be out in front, launching global efforts--but unfortunately the church has trailed in this."

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"During the planning session the group agreed missions can no longer be seen as reaching out to Third World countries but must be envisioned as all cultures reaching back and forth to each other. God has dealt different measures of various gifts to different national groups, the leaders decided, and these should be shared. Global cooperation, they agreed, will require those who previously received missionaries to think of themselves as senders, and vice versa.

"I see what we are trying to do here as a higher step, a great improvement over partnership between a convention and missionaries on the field," said Samuel T. Ola Akande, the Nigerian Baptist Convention's general secretary. "Here people can share from all over the world. We can learn from sharing together."

Up to five members will be invited from each national Baptist group attending, and the conference probably will be conducted in six languages. Attendance will be by invitation only, and those who come will provide their own travel funds. Southern Baptists will participate in the consultation as equal partners with other Baptist groups.

"This is not a consultation like we've had in the past to talk about the work of the Foreign Mission Board," said the Southern Baptist board's president, R. Keith Parks. "What we're talking about is sitting down as equal partners to talk about how the various ones of us who are involved in foreign missions can coordinate and plan strategy in order to better reach the whole world."

Parks hopes the ideas which emerge from the consultation will make an impact on other Baptist groups and on other Christians beyond Baptists. "But we have to start in a limited arena, and model something that is productive," he said. "Then on the basis of some actual happenings we would be in a position to share it in a broader Baptist, or even a broader Christian, fellowship."

Waldemiro Tymchak, executive secretary for Brazilian Baptists' World Mission Board, said he could see several possible areas of worldwide cooperation, including: many groups focusing on reaching an individual city with the gospel; groups helping other groups who are not sending missionaries but who want to do so, and groups sharing their resources to educate Christian leaders and meet physical human needs.

"Partnership can combine all the world's people and create (spiritual) power—I believe that," said Stephen No, director of Baptist Church Development for the Korea Baptist Convention. "Partnership is the word the world needs this day."

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

Inflation-Hit Brazil Baptists
Sacrificing To Finance Missions

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
11/29/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--With an annual inflation rate of more than 200 percent and currency devaluation, Brazilian Baptists dedicated to a strong foreign missions effort face what appears to be an impossible task.

But God achieves the impossible, according to Waldemiro Tymchak, executive secretary of the Brazilian World Mission Board. He believes Baptists in Brazil are able to maintain 100 missionaries in 15 countries on four continents only because God never fails.

"From the point of view of that which is practical, it seems impossible," said Tymchak during a recent visit to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "But we can see the greatness of God in using us to do that which is impossible."

Their first obstacle is continuing inflation. Giving has become more sacrificial as the annual inflation rate has built to 215 percent. But with such rapid inflation, money loses 30 percent of its worth between the time churches collect it and the time it reaches the board.

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A second obstacle is devaluation of the cruzeiro, Brazil's unit of money. Cruzeiros given in missions offerings must be sent overseas in fixed dollar amounts. Because of the cruzeiro's devaluation it took more than two times (230 percent) as many cruzeiros to equal the same number of dollars sent to the field last year.

"It's a challenge, but it is a victorious challenge. We're not really defeated in this, because the more struggles we have, the more victories we have," Tymchak said. "When we submit ourselves to God's will to do missions in the context of all these difficulties, God never fails—he always blesses. We have observed this: we send, but we are the ones blessed."

Because Brazilian Baptists have committed themselves to missions, their missions program has continued to expand. "What we need to see today more than anything else is that God is acting. He is moving among our churches in Brazil in light of the fact that we are developing a greater missionary vision. God has said, 'Go!' and our people continue to obey."

More than 360 churches have been organized annually in Brazil during recent years, Tymchak said. Many of them, though unable to build a meeting place, have raised large sums for mission offerings. And thousands of young people have been called into the ministry in the midst of economic hardship.

Tymchak came to Richmond, Va., to meet with four other national Baptist leaders. The leaders, including Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, began planning a Global Consultation on World Evangelization, which they hope will lead to cooperation among all cultures in reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The consultation is scheduled for June 26-28 during Foreign Missions Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

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Treasury Tax Plan Would Axe
Ministers' Housing Benefits

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
11/29/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--Besides establishing what many religious leaders feel would amount to a disincentive to charitable giving, the Treasury Department tax simplification plan would also do away with ministers' housing benefits.

Under the plan unveiled by Secretary of the Treasury Donald T. Regan, clergy housing allowances would be shelved by striking from the Internal Revenue Code a 1954 provision designed to create tax equity in clergy housing.

By doing away with clergy housing allowances altogether, the Treasury proposal would resolve a nearly two-year dispute over a 1983 IRS decision to deny clergy the normal deductions for mortgage interest and real estate taxes to the extent these expenses were paid from a tax-exempt housing allowance.

Darold H. Morgan, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board, reacted strongly to the proposal, declaring it would have "a devastating impact on ministers, particularly those who have lived in parsonages all their active careers and are having to buy or rent homes for the first time in retirement."

Annuity Board general counsel Gary Nash also pointed to other provisions in the Treasury Department's plan that would have a negative impact on other "fringe benefits" currently enjoyed by ministers as well as others. Benefits which would no longer be excluded from taxable income under the Treasury Department proposal include health insurance above caps of \$175 monthly for family coverage and \$70 monthly for individual coverage, group-term life insurance, and employer-provided death benefits.

Secretary Regan's massive set of recommendations, filling three thick volumes, has been presented to President Reagan for review. The president thus far has given no indication which of the many proposals he will accept before sending a comprehensive tax reform package to Congress early next year.

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Baptist Leaders Negative
To Proposed Tax Changes

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders are reacting with concern and perplexity to the provision in the Treasury Department's comprehensive tax reform plan which would allow deductions for charitable contributions only after they exceed two percent of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income.

Baptist officials interviewed by Baptist Press for initial reactions to the plan sent to President Reagan by Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan Nov. 28 expressed fear the plan would curtail giving to churches, church-related institutions and other charitable causes. Their criticisms ranged from philosophical to practical.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Washington-headquartered Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, issued a statement stating, "All of our churches are clearly committed to meeting basic human need as an aspect of gospel ministry. Hurting people are helped by commonly accepted incentives of a national tax policy which encourages charitable giving."

Dunn, whose group represents the church-state concerns of the Southern Baptist Convention and several other U.S. Baptist bodies in the nation's capital, added: "We now face a cruel contradiction when the Administration calls upon the private sector--including churches--to respond to hunger and homelessness at the same time another part of that same government suggests a tax package that will actually discourage giving by the majority of Americans who contribute only a modest percentage of their income to charity."

That apparent contradiction in Reagan administration tax philosophy was criticized as a "shameful and erroneous line of thinking," by Belmont College President William E. Troutt.

Troutt, whose Nashville, Tenn., school is affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, expressed frustration with the plan, saying it is actually a "modification of tax expenditure theories" advanced in an earlier day by liberal economists. That view, Troutt said, holds that what goes to charity ought to be going instead to government. He expressed surprise such a view is being advanced by the supposedly conservative Reagan administration.

"A lot of people would like to see us (church-related colleges and churches) out of business," he declared, adding that over time the tax philosophy advanced in the Treasury plan "would mean the end to most charitable institutions." Even more important, he said, "it would signal an end to the pluralistic society and freedom we cherish as Americans and usher in big government in its most complete and final form."

The basic legal groundwork for the view that tax exemption for charitable institutions is expendable was laid two years ago by the U.S. Supreme Court, Troutt said, when in the cases of *Regan v. Taxation with Representation* and *Bob Jones University v. U.S.*, a narrow high court majority ruled tax exemption is a form of governmental subsidy.

Cecil A. Ray, national director of the SBC Planned Growth In Giving campaign, also expressed concern about the potential growth of government suggested in the Regan plan and insisted private organizations are more efficient in spending money than is government. Ray cited studies showing private groups' ability to make a given sum go two to three times as far as government does in providing the same social services.

Ray, whose assignment with the SBC Executive Committee is designed to dramatically enlarge Southern Baptists' level of giving as part of the denomination's Bold Mission effort, declared further: "It is vital to the welfare of our nation and its religious life that the government continue to encourage the principle of private support of churches, charities and private institutions. To destroy this principle of American life would result in a sad loss of the quality of life and in an added tax burden."

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said he is "strongly opposed" to the proposal and believes it would reduce what some persons give to churches, colleges, seminaries and other charities.

"Although many Southern Baptists contribute much more than two percent of their income to their church, the average church member gives only two percent to his church," Bennett added. "If this amount were disallowed as a charitable contribution some--and perhaps hundreds of thousands--would cease to give anything." He expressed concern also that the plan "would penalize the liberal giver."

SBC Annuity Board President Darold H. Morgan reacted to the plan by insisting, "Certainly we believe in rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but it is disturbing to see the traditional tax incentives for charitable giving treated as loopholes to be closed."

He added: "It is ironic the Treasury proposals to address the huge budget deficits of this country would disallow charitable giving deductions for the first two percent of adjusted gross income given to charity and wipe out the present favorable tax treatment for larger gifts of appreciated property to charity, when the Reagan administration is looking to churches and other charitable organizations to pick up the country's social needs resulting from cuts in government social and welfare programs."

Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Education Commission, said he is concerned the two percent threshold might be increased "once it has been established."

Walker, whose job includes encouraging large donors to give to Baptist colleges, said such schools "will be greatly affected" because large donors will not be able to claim tax deductions for larger gifts of appreciated property. The Regan package, he said, "will certainly affect the very existence of private higher education."

Two executive directors whose state conventions voted earlier this month to divide Cooperative Program gifts 50-50 between state Baptist causes and the national SBC programs had differing reactions.

Joe L. Ingram, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, said like Walker, "I'm afraid they would keep raising" the two percent threshold. Calling the tax deductibility provision a "time-honored practice," Ingram said the government "either ought to say gifts are deductible or not deductible."

"They (government officials) ought to leave us alone," he concluded.

Dan C. Stringer, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, said that while he would be concerned if tax deductibility were removed altogether, "I'm not going to wring my hands over two percent." He said further, "The two percent factor is far below what we call on our people to give, particularly as we enter into Planned Growth In Giving," the program led by Ray which challenges Southern Baptists to give between 15 and 25 percent of their gross income to their churches.

"I don't think this would cause real, committed Christian stewards to stop giving," Stringer explained, adding: "I would not back off at all...because I'm giving from a different motive altogether."

Among charitable institutions expected to suffer most if the Regan plan were to become law are not-for-profit hospitals, among them many Baptist hospitals and medical centers.

A spokesman for the largest such facility related to Southern Baptists, Baptist Memorial Hospital of Memphis, Tenn., said the Regan plan "appears to invade the area of charitable giving" and "is certain to adversely affect the amount of gifts received for charitable purposes."

Roy Jennings, director of communications at the hospital, told Baptist Press that while the facility receives no Cooperative Program funds, it relies on private contributions "to help provide care for the indigent, to establish new services and to support educational activities and research."



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