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87-73

Televangelist Ministries Scant Compared To Cooperative Program

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)—Six of the leading television evangelists last year had a combined income equivalent to the missions giving of 14.6 million Southern Baptists.

But the missionary and humanitarian ministries supported by the TV evangelists are scant compared to the worldwide missions programs supported by Southern Baptists, said Robert F. Polk, director of Cooperative Program Promotion for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Southern Baptists in 1986 gave slightly more than \$635 million for missions causes, somewhat less than the combined incomes of six of the top televangelists featured in the April 6 U.S. News and World Report.

Five of the televangelists and their 1986 gross incomes, according to U.S. News, are Pat Robertson, \$176 million; Jim Bakker, \$172 million; Jimmy Swaggart, \$142 million; Jerry Falwell, \$100 million and Robert Schuller, \$36 million. Also included is Oral Roberts whose income was listed at \$58 million in 1985.

Between them, the six TV evangelists, in addition to their television programs, supported four schools, a hospital, three churches, two ministries to needy children, a home for unwed mothers and a ministry to the needy, U.S. News reported.

Meanwhile, Southern Baptist state conventions supported 67 colleges and universities with more than 200,000 students and dozens of children's homes, hospitals and homes for aging.

Texas Baptists last year gave \$86.7 million for missions, including \$58.7 million through the Cooperative Program. They supported eight hospitals, four child care homes and homes for aging with multiple branches, eight universities, San Marcos Academy and Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary. The Cooperative Program and the annual Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions also assisted the 5,000 churches and missions in reaching people for Christ, strengthening missions and starting new work.

Through their missions giving, Texas Baptists joined hands with other Southern Baptists to support 3,756 foreign missionaries in more than 100 nations and 3,637 home missionaries in the United States.

Last year the Cooperative Program provided ministries to students on 1,100 campuses in the United States through the Baptist Student Unions.

Also through the Cooperative Program in 1986, Southern Baptists supported six seminaries. In fact, one of every five seminary students in the United States is enrolled in a Southern Baptist seminary.

Also the Cooperative Program supports the work of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission which has established a television network, American Christian Television System (ACTS).

Another striking difference between the televangelists and Southern Baptist missions giving is the accountability factor, said Polk.

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The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability in Washington, which seeks to monitor the ethical performance of agencies independent of church control, says none of the top ten moneymakers among the televangelists belongs to the council, says U.S. News. However, scores of religious groups -- from Billy Graham Crusade to Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship -- do report their finances to the Evangelical Council.

Polk said, "The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists is a system of openness and accountability."

There is openness as messengers from the churches decide in state conventions and at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention how the money will be spent. Regular reports are given to the churches and to the denomination at state and national levels. Both the state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention have annual audits with reports made available to the constituency.

"From the local church to the missionary on the foreign field, every penny given is accounted for," Polk said.

"The Cooperative Program is a financial channel of cooperation between state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention that enables persons making undesignated gifts through their churches to support missionary, educational and benevolent work on state, national and international levels," said Polk.

"Since adopting the Cooperative Program as their plan for carrying out Christ's Great Commission, Southern Baptists have had the greatest outreach ministry in the world."

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Jerusalem Baptists
Lose \$1,200 In Theft

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5/11/87

JERUSALEM (BP)--Thieves stole a 1,300-pound safe containing about \$1,200 in cash and checks in late April from Baptist House, a ministry to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

Southern Baptist representative John Anthony, director of the 62-year-old institution, said the intruders apparently broke through one door and used a key to open another in order to obtain access to the safe.

A witness who saw a truck being loaded about 8:15 p.m. April 28 outside Baptist House has submitted a description of the vehicle to police.

An employee of the institution was questioned by police but released the next day.

Anthony said the ministry has suffered four petty thefts already this year, but added, "These were professionals."

An unusually large amount of money had accumulated because the Baptist House secretary had been out a few days and banking hours had been restricted because of Israeli holidays. Most of the money stolen belonged to the Narkis Street Baptist Church, which was burned by arsonists in October 1982. Baptist House and the church, which now meets in a tent-like structure, are located on the same property.

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Baptist Can 'Touch' Cities
Says Seminary Professor

By Sherri A. Brown

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5/11/87

BOSTON (BP)--Southern Baptists do not have the potential of reaching the cities for Christ because the cities are too massive and Baptists are too small, a seminary professor told participants at a Models of Metropolitan Ministry conference.

"Nine million active Southern Baptists are not able to have a dramatic impact on 230 million people, if by reaching the cities you mean achieving a majority status there," Larry McSwain, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., told almost 100 people at the meeting sponsored by the Southern Baptist Baptist Home Mission Board.

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With 56 percent of all Southern Baptists in non-metro communities, Southern Baptists are too rural a denomination to be able to effectively reach the cities, McSwain added.

Southern Baptists are also too humanistic to make an impact on the cities, according to McSwain. "We are not going to reach the city for Jesus Christ. We're not called to do that. Jesus Christ will reach the city — through us, in spite of us, but not because of us," he said.

Southern Baptists who don't understand the difference between faith and culture are another reason McSwain gave for not reaching the cities. "We confuse a cultural experience with the understanding of what it means to be a faithful community," he explained.

"If I so baptize my understanding of Jesus Christ with the way I experienced it in Oklahoma, I have no chance of sharing the gospel in Boston."

Instead of "reaching" the city, McSwain suggested there is a "potential for touching the cities." Using a strategy based on the Apostle Paul, McSwain listed five ways to touch today's cities.

-- Find leaders who are comfortable with the city. "You don't have to grow up in the city, but until you fall in love with the city, you will have little impact there," he said.

-- Ministers must go as teams, not individuals.

-- There can be no restriction on communicating the gospel: it is for everyone.

-- The Apostle Paul responded to any kind of human need he found. "It is time to quit the fight between evangelism and Christian social ministries. We must combine all resources to reach the city," McSwain stressed.

-- The laity must become committed to ministry as a part of their vocation. Ministers alone cannot touch the city.

In another speech Ray Bakke, professor at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill., listed traits necessary to minister in the city.

-- Ministers need a strong sense of identity and security to cope with the city environment.

-- Ministers must be life-long learners.

-- Ministers must have a servant spirit, not a messianic spirit. "In the 1960s Baptists took their inerrant Bibles and fled from the city," Bakke said. "But when we left, the Spirit stayed."

-- To survive in the cities, ministers must be "networkers." In a church of 100 members, there are at least 400 "networks," Bakke said. "Since research says 90 percent of all people who come into the church do so because of relationships, these networks are important."

-- Ministers must have a vision of and for the city.

-- The churches must learn to celebrate the Kingdom of God. Bakke suggested that the association come together several times each year to recognize the Kingdom of God in their midst. "If you don't celebrate, you can't survive in the city," he said.

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Souls Won In Mexico
Despite Opposition

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
5/11/87

DALLAS (BP)--Amid strong opposition by clergy and media in Leon, Mex., called "the cradle of Mexican Catholicism," 129 Lubbock Baptists reported 682 professions of faith in Christ through a Partnership Missions effort in the Zuriel Baptist Association.

"By their zeal in serving the Lord, the brethren from Lubbock left a positive image that will never be forgotten," said Josue Gonzalez G., director of missions for Zuriel Association which covers three states in Central Mexico.

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The volunteers, primarily from First Baptist Church and Iglesia Bautista Hispana, both of Lubbock, were the largest single group to serve in the Mexico Partnership, said Bill Gray, Partnership Missions coordinator for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Texas Baptists are in the early phases of a second consecutive three-year evangelistic partnership with Mexico Baptists and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The Lubbock volunteers linked hands with Mexico Baptists in many areas of ministry, said Sam Douglass, university minister at First Church of Lubbock. They did construction on eight church sites and built a clinic; held backyard Bible clubs, personal evangelism and clown ministries; and conducted medical and dental ministries under direction of general practitioner James R. Matthews and dentist Myles Sadler, both of Lubbock.

Gonzalez said the partnership volunteers who served in the city of Salamanca were warmly received by city officials. "The clowns presented a program for children, and all of the people attended," he added.

"Local authorities provided sound equipment, scenery and all that was necessary for the presentation."

Gonzalez said many people received medical aid. "This made a tremendously-favorable impact and presented a good image of Baptists, not only to the city of Salamanca, but also to the city of the Valley of Santiago, Guanajuato.

"We are amazed at the ways in which the Lord used the brethren from Lubbock. Some of them, without knowing any Spanish at all, could communicate with the church members and the people of the area."

Only in the city of Leon did the Catholic clergy react against the Baptists. Gray said nowhere is the environment more difficult for Baptist work. "It is from this area that the Cristeros movement had its beginning toward the end of the last revolution in Mexico with the stated purpose of wiping out evangelical Christianity," Gray said.

"Baptists who live and work in this area do so under very adverse circumstances."

The propaganda efforts of the Catholic clergy was actually favorable for the Baptists because it has projected the image of the Baptists throughout all of the region, Gonzalez said.

"Many people knew nothing about us, and by means of the propaganda from the Catholic clergy on television and radio we are now known in three states."

Gonzalez said the reaction of the Catholic clergy "does not frighten us. To the contrary, it motivates us to redouble our efforts and commitment to serve the Lord."

Many Catholics condemned the propaganda of their clergy, said Gonzalez. They criticized severely the partisan attitude of the media.

As a result of the partnership effort, the pastor of First Baptist Church of Leon, was invited to write an article for the local paper on who Baptists are and what they are doing.

"God grant that many more churches can come to Mexico to respond to the Macedonian call: 'Come to Mexico and help us,'" said Gonzalez. "There will be no problems in doing so if it is done for the glory of God."

Gray said, "The Lubbock group was, without a doubt, the best prepared team we have had go to Mexico. The requirements were strenuous and their preparation arduous, but they did it all with enthusiasm and joy."

Gray said a number of other Baptist associations in Mexico have asked to become partners in evangelism with Texas Baptist associations. There are also requests by Mexico Baptists for construction teams and vacation Bible school teams, he added.

The week of partnership missions was concluded by a rally with the crowd overflowing the courtyard, said Douglass.

"There were no 'gringos' or 'Mexicans,'" said Douglass, "just Christian brothers and sisters who love the Lord and each other. The service lasted 4 1/2 hours, but it had to end so the missionaries could load their buses and begin their 29-hour journey back to Lubbock. There were few dry eyes as the buses rolled out of Leon."

Asked "Would you do it all over again?" the volunteers responded unanimously, "Just tell us when," Douglass reported.

Gonzalez said, "All of the churches of our area were strengthened, revived and inspired by the enthusiasm of the brethren from Lubbock and their dedication in serving the Lord. We are sure that this work will bear fruit for time to come."

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Clinic Launches Second Wave
For Evangelism Training

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
5/11/87

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--For Reece Lightell, sharing the gospel with a friend in a Mississippi River delta home was a new experience.

Lightell grew up in the community wedged between the river levee and the bayou 50 miles south of New Orleans, but he had never shared the gospel with his neighbors before the recent New Orleans Witness Training Clinic.

Lightell and about 20 other church workers from City Price Baptist Church learned how to witness to others and put their new skills into practice during the clinic. City Price church members were among the more than 1,700 workers in 32 churches participating in the clinic.

Lightell was one of many in church reporting sessions and a group rally who said they had shared the plan of salvation with someone for the first time during the clinic.

A people search on Saturday began the week-long clinic with training sessions each evening including witnessing visits.

This is the second phase of an effort to train "the largest standing army for evangelism ever," according to Roy Edgemon, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department.

The training plan was a dream which began four years ago to develop a way to train Sunday school leaders to be evangelistic, Edgemon said.

Edgemon along with Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school department, and Robert Hamblin, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's evangelism section, developed the plan which was unveiled in May 1985 with a goal of training one million Sunday school workers in evangelism by 1990.

"I don't know of anything else we have that emphasizes evangelism so strongly for Sunday school workers to lead people to the Lord," Edgemon said.

An equipping center module, "Training Sunday School Workers in Evangelism," the first phase of the project, was released in January 1986.

The module, written by Bernard Spooner, Sunday school director for Texas Baptists, sold more copies in the first six months than any previous equipping center module with more than 10,000 churches using the module, Edgemon said.

"I think the module and the 1986 Good News revivals had a part in turning around our baptism statistics. Our idea is to keep that going with a focus on the project for five years and then have another emphasis on evangelism," he said.

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Southern Baptists recorded 363,000 baptisms in 1986 for an increase after four consecutive years of declines.

Those statistics emphasize the need for evangelism training. More than 6,000 churches did not report any baptisms last year, Piland said.

Training workers to go out from the church to share the gospel will be crucial in reaching many of the more than 100 million unchurched persons in the nation, Piland said.

"Many people will never hear great preaching from the pulpit. If we don't send our people into the world to witness, we'll never win the world," Piland said.

Piland, who participated in the clinic as a team leader at First Baptist Church of Kenner, said, "This has revealed new ways to reach people. We can reach more people and training our workers is a way to do it."

Clinic sessions trained Sunday school workers in finding prospects, sharing testimonies and the gospel with prospects and preparing Sunday school sessions with an evangelistic emphasis.

Edgemon predicted a spinoff effect from the New Orleans clinic as clinic workers return to their states. The more than 270 workers represented 30 states including state convention employees from 11 states.

Project planners hope workers trained in the four clinics sponsored jointly by the Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board will then conduct similar clinics in their states or associations.

"That involvement will achieve the goal of equipping the army of Sunday school and church training workers for evangelism," Edgemon said.

Future clinics are planned for San Francisco, April 20-24, 1988; Kansas City, Kan.; April 22-27, 1989 and Greenville, S.C., Jan. 26-Feb. 1, 1990.