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February 25, 1988

88-31

SBC Subcommittee Affirms
BP, But Urges Restraint

By Jim Newton

NASHVILLE (BP)--A subcommittee of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee generally affirmed the Baptist Press news service, but urged greater restraint in reporting sensitive controversial issues in an effort to promote peace and harmony.

Acting on a recommendation of its public relations workgroup, the SBC Executive Committee declined to conduct an investigation of "objectivity and fairness" in Baptist Press news reporting from 1978 to the present.

A motion calling for such an investigation was referred to the 70-member committee by the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis last June. The motion was made by Dave Lucas, editor of the independent, autonomous Southern Baptist Journal published in Austin, Texas.

The Executive Committee listed four reasons for declining the request for an investigation of Baptist Press.

(1) It would be contrary to the spirit of the Peace Committee report adopted by the SBC in 1987; (2) It would relate to personnel no longer under employment; (3) It would entail the prohibitive task of studying more than 9,000 news releases in the 10-year period; and (4) It would preclude the fact that the public relations workgroup is responsible for advising the Executive Committee concerning the work of its public relations and Baptist Press staff.

Two other recommendations urged the Baptist Press to promote implementation of the Peace Committee report, and urged the Baptist Press, state Baptist papers and Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to publish and distribute the entire text of the Peace Committee report.

In addition to its recommendations, the public relations workgroup distributed to members of the Executive Committee a three-page report evaluating Baptist Press releases distributed from April 1987 to February 1988.

The summary report was prepared, according to PR workgroup chairman Julian M. Motley of Durham, N.C., "with a positive view toward ... bringing an affirmation of the Baptist Press, which in turn might hopefully raise the trust level of all Southern Baptists and enhance the process of peace."

Motley said the goal of the report is "peace" in the denomination, and called on Baptist Press to take a leadership role in working toward peace in the convention. The workgroup, in its report, urged Baptist Press to exercise "Christian restraint" in publishing releases which tend to impugn the motives of any Southern Baptists, or which tend to revive hostile feelings "unnecessarily."

The report listed five examples of "positive" releases, and five examples of "negative" news that should have been handled with greater restraint or might indicate a degree of "biased positions."

The workgroup observed it could not conclude that all press releases have been totally objective and balanced, because "some bias in reporting is inevitable, since the particular orientation of a writer is sometimes reflected in his judgment."

In addition to the observations evaluating Baptist Press releases by the seven-member workgroup, the Southern Baptist Press Association distributed to the Executive Committee their own analysis of Baptist Press releases.

The editors' analysis showed "no evidence of any bias in the performance of the reporting," according to Don McGregor, editor of the Baptist Record in Mississippi, who chaired the committee of eight editors asked to evaluate 897 releases from April to December of 1987.

In a statement of support for Baptist Press, the editors said the news service has done "a fair, accurate and comprehensive job of reporting events in Southern Baptist life."

Both the statement from the Southern Baptist Press Association and the report of the public relations workgroup affirmed the work of Al Shackelford, director of Baptist Press. The workgroup report observed there has been improvement in the achievement of fairness and objectivity since Shackelford became director of the news service in April of 1987.

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Patterson, Land Report
On Conditions In SBC

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
2/25/88

DALLAS (BP)--About 50,000 messengers may attend the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, to decide between Richard Jackson and Jerry Vines for president, predicted Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas.

Giving an "Update on the Southern Baptist Convention" at the annual School of the Prophets at First Baptist Church of Dallas Feb. 20, Patterson said, "Jerry Vines has agreed he will seriously take the matter before the Lord, and I feel fairly confident that he will say, 'yes,' that he will let his name be put up."

Patterson shared the podium with Richard Land, Criswell College's vice president for academic affairs who is on leave of absence while working for the Texas governor.

Patterson said Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., understands the need for the continuation of the conservative resurgence and there is a danger to the convention in "turning it back the other way."

He said Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, also is an inerrantist but charged Jackson has been co-opted by the moderates.

"If you're concerned about the conservative resurgence, just remember that we've come to the day when the only way neo-orthodoxy can hope to win is to run an inerrantist for president who will do their bidding," said Patterson. "Richard Jackson differs from me in that I not only believe in biblical inerrancy, but I also want to see the system changed to bring us back to a position of biblical inerrancy."

"He (Jackson) has been working in tandem in times past with Winfred Moore, (pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, and former SBC first vice president) for example, who has openly identified himself as a moderate in this thing, although Winfred also says that he is a conservative."

Patterson said Jackson also has allowed himself to be used by 'Baptist Laity Journal' and by John Baugh, a Houston layman who is a leader of Laity for the Baptist Faith and Message.

"Richard Jackson is a conservative whom I love and about whom I hurt a great deal," said Patterson. "I don't like the estrangement I feel. I sent him an olive branch letter, and, frankly, he beat me over the head with it."

Patterson applauded the recent announcement Lewis A. Drummond will be recommended as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., to the school's board of trustees March 14-15. Patterson was one of three final candidates for the position.

He said Drummond, the Billy Graham professor of evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is the "man at Southern Seminary who has stood by our evangelical students when they've taken a lot of persecution and harassment."

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"He's not going in and initiate some sort of purge, and none of us would expect him to. ... But there are a number of positions open at the present time, and he can begin to build with very competent scholars who have no reservations about the absolute trustworthiness of biblical revelation.

"I believe the whole situation on the East Coast is going to turn around, and we're going to see revival begin, and much of it will be sponsored right off the campus of Southeastern Seminary."

Asked about the condition of the seminaries, Patterson said Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary never were "the subject of the greatest concern."

"Had not Dr. Russell Dilday (president of Southwestern Seminary) decided to impose himself into the question and decided to become a vigorous opponent of the conservatives for awhile, I don't think anything would have ever focused on Southwestern Seminary at all."

Problems are continuing, he said, at Southeastern, Midwestern and Southern seminaries.

Patterson said Southern Seminary's faculty voted down the recommendation of its administration to employ Grant Osborne of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School as a professor. "Dr. Osborne is an inerrantist, and the faculty voted him down," said Patterson. "I want to exonerate Dr. Roy Honeycutt (Southern's president) and the dean, because both of them were for him and were making an effort to meet the response of the Peace Committee."

Patterson also praised Honeycutt for his support of faculty members who have been asked to write for the new Broadman Bible commentary, of which Patterson is a consulting editor.

He noted that no one will be asked to write for the commentary who does not affirm he is comfortable with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

"When it was noised they were going to be writing, the instant response of some was to be very critical," said Patterson. "In faculty meeting, Dr. Honeycutt insisted they be given full freedom to do that and that there be no pressure brought in regard to this matter."

Patterson and Land renewed charges of unfairness by Baptist state papers and by Baptist Press news service, saying the public media have been "fairer and more even-handed. The whole thing would have been over by now and normalcy would have returned had there been a fairness and even-handedness of treatment," said Patterson. "Frankly, when I read some of the press reports about me, I say, 'Good night, if that's true, I don't like me either.'"

In keeping with the SBC Peace Committee's requests for an end to the conflict, Patterson said his group elected not to have "informational meetings," and he suggested the "Southern Baptist Advocate" newspaper be limited to a single issue, near the time of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"But the moderates increased their activity, and eventually we had only two choices: let it go and go to the SBC and be beaten or print the "Advocate" regularly," he said.

Patterson said he believes Texas Baptists will provide 12,000-13,000 messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention in San Antonio, and most will vote in the most conservative way.

Patterson and Land said the votes are sometimes skewed due to denominational workers. "I don't think we have the right to tell churches who they can send as messengers," said Land, "but I think we would have the right to say Cooperative Program money should never be used to pay the way of denominational employees to vote on budgets and other matters that directly affect their agencies and institutions.

"I would personally support a bylaw change that would say that if a person is going to be a messenger that he come on his own, or his expenses be picked up by his church."

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Land cited misconceptions concerning the conflict between the Baptist Joint Committee and the Public Affairs Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention on which he serves. He said the Public Affairs Committee asked to meet with the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee to discuss staff changes in response to a motion referred to it by the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The executive committee of the Baptist Joint Committee voted no and made it clear they did not believe our agency had the right to independent evaluation of the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs," Land said. "I have always been taught that one of the basic principles of Southern Baptist ecclesiology is that Southern Baptists do not contribute large sums of money and do not let people say they represent them unless the person, agency or institution is accountable to trustees elected by the SBC.

"We didn't say they should just be accountable to us. We didn't say we had the right to fire them, but we did have the right to get information from them, interview them and evaluate them to make our report to the Southern Baptist Convention."

After the full board of the Baptist Joint Committee voted 25-11 not to permit evaluation of the staff, said Land, the 17-member Public Affairs Committee voted 8-4 to recommend that Southern Baptists dissolve financial and institutional ties with the Baptist Joint Committee and to set up a functioning public affairs committee to speak on First Amendment and religious liberty issues.

Then, said Land, the chairman of the Christian Life Commission called the chairman of the Public Affairs Committee and suggested officers of the two groups meet and discuss an alternative to establishing another agency.

The proposal was to merge and let the Christian Life Commission, which has already opened an office in Washington, speak not only on moral issues but also on First Amendment and religious liberty issues as well, he added.

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Supreme Court Rejects
Lawsuit Against SBC

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
2/25/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--The United States Supreme Court has rejected a legal challenge brought by four messengers to the 1985 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention seeking federal court relief from what they claimed were parliamentary irregularities by then-SBC President Charles F. Stanley.

In an apparently unanimous action announced without comment Feb. 22, the nation's high court brought to an end a legal battle initiated by four messengers to the Dallas meeting. More than 45,000 messengers -- an all-time record -- registered for what was seen as a key showdown between conservative and moderate factions in the denomination.

During the Dallas convention, the disputed parliamentary decisions centered on a floor challenge to the Committee on Committee's nominations for members to the powerful Committee on Boards. Richmond, Va., pastor James Slatton presented a motion to substitute an entire slate of new nominees to the Committee on Boards, but was ruled out of order. Stanley appealed to the body to sustain his ruling, but in a close ballot vote -- taken just before a mid-day adjournment -- they voted instead to allow the substitute slate to be presented.

When messengers reconvened that evening for the next session, Stanley announced that on the advice of his parliamentarians, he was ruling the Slatton motion out of order again on the ground that SBC Bylaw 16 stated members of the Committee on Boards "shall be nominated to the convention by the Committee on Committees." The convention then elected the original slate as the new Committee on Boards, over objections from the floor.

The decade-long struggle over control centers on composition of the Committee on Boards -- renamed last year the Committee on Nominations -- which nominates trustees for 20 denominational agencies and institutions. The Committee on Nominations is proposed by the Committee on Committees, which is appointed by the president.

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Two moderate messengers to the 1985 meeting, Robert S. and Julia J. Crowder of Birmingham, Ala., asked the SBC Executive Committee in September of 1985 to set aside the election of the Committee on Boards. When the Executive Committee declined, the Crowders -- joined by co-plaintiffs H. Allan McCartney and Henry C. Cooper -- filed suit Dec. 5, 1985, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

A second and identical suit, filed by five other messengers in Georgia's Fulton County Superior Court, later was voluntarily withdrawn. Both suits were filed in Georgia because the SBC was incorporated under Georgia law in 1845 when the denomination organized in Augusta.

U.S. District Judge Robert H. Hall dismissed the suit May 5, 1986, ruling his court lacked jurisdiction in the case "because it involves the resolution of an ecclesiastical controversy." Were he to intervene, Hall said, he would be "in violation of the First Amendment's requirement of separation of church and state." Hall wrote further, "What is actually at issue in this case is a question of church governance."

After Hall's ruling the Crowders appealed to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, also in Atlanta. There, a three-judge panel upheld Hall, ruling Sept. 28, 1987, the district judge was right in refusing on church-state grounds to decide the dispute.

Circuit Judge Phyllis A. Kravitch, writing for the unanimous panel, held the dispute was "one step removed from a major doctrinal conflict between two factions within the Southern Baptist Convention" and involved "questions of church discipline and the composition of the church hierarchy" which "are at the core of ecclesiastical concern."

The Crowders appealed to the Supreme Court Dec. 28, 1987. The high court's rejection of the appeal has the effect of leaving in place the lower rulings and marks the end of the case.

The Feb. 22 Supreme Court action came as the SBC Executive Committee was convening in Nashville. That evening, Executive Committee attorney James P. Guenther of Nashville told applauding members of the body, "The Crowder suit is history."

Commending the Executive Committee for what he called its statesmanship, Guenther said convention response to the lawsuit had been "carefully measured." Two convictions, he added, led the convention and Executive Committee in defending the suit: "First, it was our judgment that what hope existed for a resolution of our internal difficulties lay within the convention and not in the courts of government. Secondly, it was our contention that any response which we made to the merits of the plaintiffs' complaint in court would fuel the schism."

Consequently, Guenther said: "We refused to submit to the jurisdiction of the court. We refused to recognize the court as an appropriate forum for the resolution of our internal ecclesiastical differences over bylaws which mirrored our internal controversy. ... We refused to debate the interpretation of our private legal instruments in a courtroom. We declined to legitimate the plaintiffs' resort to the law. The legal authority for our position was not 'Robert's Rules of Order,' about which few Baptists could agree. Rather, our defense was based on the First Amendment's free exercise (of religion) right, a concept deeply rooted in Baptist heritage."

In their unsuccessful effort to have the Supreme Court review the lower rulings, attorneys for the Crowders argued civil courts could exercise jurisdiction in the case consistent with the First Amendment. What was at issue, they insisted, was not doctrinal or theological but procedural. They cited cases in both federal and state courts they claimed upheld that view, concluding, "By denying enforcement of the SBC's bylaws providing for majority rule under neutral principles of law, the Court of Appeals' decision has permitted the democratic system of government selected by the messengers to govern the SBC's affairs to be overruled by the arbitrary actions of its presiding officer."

During the February Executive Committee meeting, members were told defense of the Crowder lawsuit has, to date, cost \$227,000. The expense is expected to go higher since legal bills for the Supreme Court appeal have yet to be paid.

Hunger Gifts Fall
For Second Year

By Tim Fields

NASHVILLE (BP)--Contributions from Southern Baptists to their denomination's program of world hunger relief in 1987 declined for the second year in a row, according to figures released in February by the Southern Baptists Home and Foreign mission boards.

Southern Baptists last year gave \$8.9 million for domestic and foreign hunger relief. The total represents a decline of 2.3 percent from 1986 and is below the record high of \$11.8 million given to hunger relief in 1985.

Gifts of \$1.3 million to domestic hunger relief administered through the Home Mission Board were up \$23,000 over 1986, while the \$7.6 million given to foreign hunger relief through the Foreign Mission Board was down by \$181,000.

According to hunger experts at the two mission boards and the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, hunger gifts for 1987 are cause for both rejoicing and concern.

"Although hunger gifts have leveled off around the \$9 million mark, they are well above the \$5.5 million giving levels from 1980-1983," said Robert M. Parham, an associate director of the Christian Life Commission responsible for the world hunger concerns. "The \$8.9 million given in 1987 is still the third largest amount given by Southern Baptists for world hunger causes."

Nathan Porter, hunger consultant for the Home Mission Board, praised Southern Baptists for recognizing domestic hunger needs. "It is encouraging to us that local churches and state conventions are including domestic hunger in their world hunger concerns and offerings," he said.

"There is no question that continued conventionwide support for Home Mission Board ministries to human need is having an increased impact in addressing poverty, hunger and homelessness in America. This money has served as seed money for many churches, enabling them to start food distribution ministries while sustaining others already in operation," Porter said.

While expressing gratitude for Southern Baptist gifts to world hunger, John Cheyne, senior consultant for human needs ministries at the Foreign Mission Board, also raised serious concerns.

"It is very obvious from every world indicator, including major crises in Ethiopia and Mozambique, the need for world hunger relief will continue to increase dramatically," Cheyne said. "At the same time, many persons have been put off because of very negative reports of how funds have been used by certain agencies.

"In contrast, Southern Baptists continue to report that 100 percent of hunger funds reach the recipients and are used as efficiently as any group in the world.

"I view the drop in hunger funds with considerable concern because the decline is far more than the actual receipts indicate. Designated gifts from a few individuals gave a tremendous boost to the total. Without those gifts, the hunger total would have been 25 percent under last year."

Southern Baptists will celebrate the 10th anniversary of World Hunger Day this October, and Christian Life Commission staff said the annual emphasis is an important key to nearly \$64 million dollars in hunger contributions given since 1978.

"For the second year in a row, we have strong evidence that Southern Baptists are giving their hunger gifts around World Hunger Day instead of throughout the year or in response to media coverage," Parham said.

"The Foreign Mission Board, for example, has received over one-third of their hunger receipts during October, November and December."

High Court Declines Review
Of Tennessee Textbook Dispute

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court will not review a lower decision that determined parents do not have a constitutional right to teach their children at home when required textbooks offend their religious sensibilities.

In a one-line order issued Feb. 22, the high court -- with no justice recording a dissent -- let stand a disputed ruling by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals last August that the Hawkins County (Tenn.) School Board was not obligated to provide the alternative reading arrangement for pupils whose parents objected to a Holt, Rhinehart and Winston reading series.

That ruling followed a trial in the east Tennessee county two years ago -- dubbed "Scopes II" by many reporters -- in which seven sets of parents detailed their objections on religious grounds to required reading assignments ranging from "Cinderella" to "Hamlet." Other objectionable reading selections in the challenged textbooks included "The Wizard of Oz," "Rumpelstiltskin" and "The Diary of Anne Frank."

Judge Thomas G. Hull of the U.S. District Court for Eastern Tennessee ruled in October 1986 the school board's refusal to accommodate its policies to the parents' and students' demands amounted to an unconstitutional infringement of the free exercise of religion. He wrote the plaintiff/parents were legitimately concerned their children "might adopt the views of a feminist, a humanist, a pacifist, an anti-Christian, a vegetarian or an advocate of a 'one-world government.'"

While refusing to order the school board to provide alternative readers in the classroom, Hull did order school officials to release the students for home instruction in reading. Tennessee is one of several states with laws on the books permitting parents to instruct their children at home, subject to periodic standardized testing to ensure regular academic progress.

But on appeal, a three-judge panel of the Cincinnati-based 6th Circuit Court ruled unanimously the parents and students had not proven their claim of religious discrimination. Chief Judge Pierce Lively wrote, "The requirement that students read the assigned materials and attend reading classes, in the absence of a showing that this participation entailed affirmation or denial of a religious belief, or performance or non-performance of a religious exercise or practice, does not place an unconstitutional burden on the students' free exercise of religion."

Lively held the state is under no constitutional obligation to shelter children "from exposure to some ideas they find offensive."

Among those ideas, cited at trial by the parents, were religious views other than Christian and portrayals of women in non-traditional roles. They also objected to examination of certain controversial subjects during reading classes, including critical examination of the free enterprise system, the military and law enforcement practices, as well as discussions of environmental issues, disarmament, gun control and abortion.

The case began in 1983, when the parents filed suit after failing to convince the Hawkins County School Board to adopt a formal policy of alternatives in reading classes for their children. Their legal challenge was funded by Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America Education and Legal Defense Foundation.

Before filing the suit, several of the parents had worked out arrangements with local elementary and middle school principals excusing their children during reading periods. They were assigned alternative reading lessons and taken to other classrooms. But the school board subsequently adopted a policy requiring teachers to use only textbooks adopted by the board.

When the students refused to read from the disputed Holt series texts, they twice were suspended. Some of the parents then enrolled their children in private Christian schools and sued public school officials.

The Supreme Court's refusal to hear their appeal of the 6th Circuit decision marks the end of the dispute.

A similar legal battle from Mobile, Ala., ended earlier when losing parents decided not to appeal a likewise unfavorable appeals court decision to the nation's high court.

No Damages For Falwell,
Supreme Court Rules

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Television preacher Jerry Falwell is not entitled to damages from Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt for infliction of emotional distress over an advertisement parody depicting Falwell's first sexual experience as a drunken incestuous rendezvous with his mother in an outhouse, the Supreme Court has ruled.

The high court's unanimous ruling reversed a jury award of \$200,000 to the Lynchburg, Va., preacher. In the jury trial, Falwell already had lost in an effort to recover damages for invasion of privacy and libel.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, in an opinion for the court, concluded that "public figures and public officials may not recover (damages) for ... intentional infliction of emotional distress ... without showing in addition that the publication contains a false statement of fact which was made with actual malice." He added, "Such a standard is necessary to give adequate breathing space to the freedoms protected by the First Amendment."

The challenged ad was a parody modeled after a series of magazine ads by Campari Liqueur featuring interviews with famous personalities about their "first time," a reference to the first time they tasted the product, but clearly designed to play off the suggestion of a first sexual encounter. The Hustler parody, titled "Jerry Falwell talks about his first time," included an "interview" in which Falwell described the sexual encounter with his mother. In small print at the bottom of the ad was the disclaimer, "Ad parody -- not to be taken seriously."

Shortly after publication of the ad in the November 1983 issue of Hustler, Falwell sued in a federal district court for damages, claiming invasion of privacy, libel and intentional infliction of emotional distress. After a trial, the jury dismissed the privacy and libel claims, but awarded \$100,000 in compensatory damages and another \$100,000 in punitive damages. The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va., later upheld the verdict and award of damages.

Overturning that decision, Rehnquist acknowledged emotional harm had been inflicted through the ad, which he described as having been "doubtless gross and repugnant in the eyes of most." Nevertheless, the chief justice said, "At the heart of the First Amendment is the recognition of the fundamental importance of the free flow of ideas and opinions on matters of public interest and concern."

Because of that principle, he said, the Supreme Court has been "particularly vigilant to ensure that individual expressions of ideas remain free from governmentally imposed sanctions."

At the same time, Rehnquist reasserted the court's longstanding view that not all speech about a public figure is immune from the sanction of money damages. Citing the landmark case of *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, Rehnquist said damage to the reputation of a public figure occasioned by publication of a "defamatory falsehood" may result in money damages, "but only if the statement was made with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not." That standard was not met in the Falwell case, Rehnquist ruled.

He noted further that one group of journalists -- cartoonists -- would be particularly vulnerable to damage suits if the standard set forth in the *New York Times* case was lowered. "Despite their sometimes caustic nature, from the early cartoon portraying George Washington as an ass down to the present day, graphic depictions and satirical cartoons have played a prominent role in public and political debate," Rehnquist wrote. "From the viewpoint of history it is clear that our political discourse would have been considerably poorer without them."

Although the caricature of Falwell and his mother in Hustler "is at best a distant cousin" of such cartoons, Rehnquist added, the court has found no way to lay down "a principled standard to separate the one from the other."

Outreach Bible Study Plans
Can Boost Evangelistic Efforts

NASHVILLE (BP)--Outreach Bible Study could provide a boost for Southern Baptist baptisms, church starting and Sunday school enrollment in 1988 if churches follow through on commitments to use the plan according to Baptist state Sunday school leaders.

State leaders and Sunday school consultants who participated in the second Outreach Bible Study Institute in Nashville said workers have been trained and churches have expressed intentions to use the concept and materials for Bible study with non-Christians.

Leaders of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission joined Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder in a panel discussion, noting Outreach Bible Study could be used in their efforts for missions and evangelism.

Outreach Bible Study for adults and youth was introduced in October 1986 as an eight-week evangelistic Bible study for non-members of churches in locations away from church.

State leaders reported successful results where the materials have been used but noted churches have been slow adopting the concept because of its non-traditional approach.

Sales of more than 20,000 adult books, 46,000 youth books and 26,000 teachers' books indicate church acceptance and interest in the evangelistic Bible study plan, said Harry Piland, director of the Sunday School Board's Sunday school division.

The lack of a reporting system makes it difficult to know how many churches have conducted Outreach Bible Studies, state leaders said.

David Cunningham, Sunday school director for the Florida Baptist Convention, said 180 churches reported Outreach Bible Studies in 1986-87, but he does not have statistics for 1987-88.

In five Outreach Bible Study groups led by Sharon Smith of Lakeview Baptist Church in Tallahassee, Fla., 17 people have accepted Christ. Of the eight people in the first group, four are now working in Sunday school, and others are regular attenders. Two from that group have since led or hosted other Outreach Bible Studies. The group has continued to meet and has completed the three volumes of the Survival Kit for New Christians.

Texas plans to use Outreach Bible Studies as the basis of 240 new Sunday school starts targeted for this year, said Richard Sims, consultant in new work and small churches in the Sunday school division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Despite the reports of success, several institute participants said church leaders want to know the materials can be effective in their own states.

Keith Wilkinson, director of the Sunday school department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, has enlisted 20 churches to serve as pacesetters to conduct Outreach Bible Studies. He said he hopes success with the pacesetters will encourage other churches to adopt the plan. A statewide goal of 450 churches conducting Outreach Bible Study by 1990 has been set.

Leaders in newer conventions hope to use Outreach Bible Study to start new Sunday schools, missions and churches.

In Wyoming, Outreach Bible Studies will be conducted in locations where new churches and missions are planned, said Bill Hardy, state Sunday school director.

The plan will help reach a goal of 100 churches by the year 2000, he said. Already, the state has two new Sunday schools that were started with Outreach Bible Study. Two Wyoming churches presently are conducting Outreach Bible Study groups to develop other new Sunday schools.

New England Baptists piloted Outreach Bible Study materials in 1985. Continued use of Outreach Bible Study has contributed to gains in baptisms and Sunday school enrollment, giving New England two consecutive years with the highest baptism and enrollment totals in the convention's history, said Mary Beth Caffey, a mission volunteer who is Sunday school director for Maine Baptist association.

"New England has seen what Outreach Bible Study can do. We believe in it," Caffey said.

Piland challenged state leaders to set an example for church leaders by conducting Outreach Bible Study sessions: "If Sunday school is the evangelistic organization of the church, we had better get involved in evangelism. We need to be witnessing. We need to be doing Outreach Bible Study."

In a panel discussion, Woman's-Missionary Union Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford said WMU mission action activities involve bringing people into the church, noting, "Outreach Bible Study is a tool we can use to accomplish that."

The materials can be used in the Home Mission Board approach of starting new work, said President Larry Lewis.

Brotherhood members already are involved in church planting and new Sunday school starts as well as other mission action activities, said President James H. Smith: "Outreach Bible Study can be effective for prison Bible studies and other ministry opportunities for men. Too much is at stake for us to be turf conscious. We don't need to be developing our own materials when we can use this (Outreach Bible Study)."

"Outreach Bible Study has much to do with the instruction of the Lord to go into the highways to reach the lost," the Sunday School Board's Elder said. "It's not just Sunday school work. We need to be working together with other agencies and with state conventions to reach the lost."

Representatives from the Sunday School Board's special ministries department and the student ministry department cited Outreach Bible Study as ideal for reaching language groups and students.

More than 2,000 students were trained to conduct Outreach Bible Study in August 1987 during a student conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico, said Art Herron, student ministry department consultant.

Outreach Bible Study materials are available in Spanish. Materials are planned for French and Korean, with additional languages to be considered.

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