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Physicians Switch Goals
As God Calls the Play

By Marion Harvey Carroll

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--South Carolinian Otis Hill Jr., M.D., had it made.

After years of surviving on a financial shoestring while he attended the University of South Carolina Medical School, Dr. Hill and his wife owned a two-story columned home and "the first car big enough to hold all of our children (four) at the same time."

Three states and hundreds of miles away, Mississippian John McNair, Ph.D., was also finally achieving his goal of "making a little money." As a medical researcher and teacher of neuroanatomy, Dr. McNair had an affluent future before him.

Then God tapped them on the shoulder, they say.

Today both young men, having taken courses as special students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, are preparing for foreign mission work.

"I had no Damascus road experience," John McNair says. "As far back as the eighth grade I felt God's call toward mission work. I kept feeling it through medical school." After graduating from the University of Mississippi Medical School, he left mission work "an open question."

"We were outwardly successful," he says of himself and his wife, the former Kathy Lee of Picayune, Miss., "but we were not within the full will of the Lord."

They found that "full will" last year, when they committed their lives to mission work after "soul-searching, praying and a great deal of introspection."

Next year Dr. McNair, a Magee, Miss., native will teach at Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India. He and his wife will be the only Southern Baptists in Vellore, which is a "village" of 400,000 people.

Their ministry will be "very unobtrusive." McNair explains: "We will not be allowed to preach. Our witness must be the day-to-day grind."

Since both McNairs have musical backgrounds--he led church music part time for 14 years and she holds a bachelor of music degree from William Carey College--they will use their talent as a key to unlock Christian influence in the land of Hinduism.

Like John McNair, Otis Hill experienced a gradual call to mission work. His, however, was punctuated with drama--ministry in the jungles of Central America and the near breakup of his marriage.

The Sumter, S.C., native received his initial taste of medical missions when he and his wife, the former Marjorie Blackwell of Mayesville, S.C., trekked to Honduras four times for short-term missionary work.

There he saw first-hand the need for physicians. One incident in particular, he recalls, crystallized his later decision.

A little girl, living in the jungle, cut her foot on broken glass. When the wound festered, her father walked day and night to carry her to the mission clinic.

"Nothing relieved the pain," Dr. Hill notes tersely. "Gangrene set in, and she died."

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"This really spoke to me. It's not necessary for little children to leave this earth in such mortal agony."

Personal tragedy also visited the Hills during their Honduran ministry. Mrs. Hill's mother became critically ill on their first trip; her father died during the third one.

"After all this," he remembers, "we decided there would be no foreign mission work for us. Then our personal life started deteriorating."

He found reasons to make house calls--"and we doctors don't like to make them!"--because he didn't want to go home.

The barometer of their married life continued plummeting until Mrs. Hill was hospitalized for minor surgery. Before the operation, she "gave her heart to Jesus," her husband smiles. "After that, life went uphill."

While attending a conference in Richmond, Va., the Hills answered the call to mission work. Today they're preparing for service in Barranquilla, Colombia, South America, where he will work as a pediatrician in the Baptist Hospital.

Marveling at the change in their lives and attitudes, he says: "Five years ago I wouldn't have gotten Marjorie away from that house without unwrapping her arms from around the columns!"

"Things" are not as important now to the Hills and the McNairs. "We realize we were giving up things," says Dr. McNair, "and it's human nature to like 'things.' But we've experienced the greatest peace and joy since we said yes."

"The only thing we haven't given up," Dr. Hill grins, "is the old car--and I wish we had!"



BAPTIST PRESS

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July 18, 1974

Magazine Charges Baptists With Silence in Politics

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists collectively have been deafening in their silence on such issues as housing, health care, ecology, taxes, ethics and energy, the denomination's Home Missions magazine says in its July-August issue on the church and politics.

In an article by Everett Hullum, associate editor, the magazine says that while Southern Baptists were, in recent months, instrumental in defeating legislation in Texas that would have allowed parimutuel betting and a liquor-by-the drink proposal in North Carolina, they usually seemed to do little or nothing--collectively--to:

- encourage political ethics and campaign reform legislation;
- stimulate legislation to check inflation;
- demand strengthening of environmental protection laws;
- promote measures that will bring the United States to energy independence while not allowing "unconscionable" profits to energy-related industries...among other issues.

The magazine notes that some individual Southern Baptists and a few Baptist state and denominational agencies have spoken out and, in some cases, "their voices have been heard with significant results."

Yet issues such as housing, health care and others probably exert as much pressure on the lives of Southern Baptists as the traditional targets of gambling and drinking of alcoholic beverages, Hullum writes.

One interviewee cautioned that while it is good for Southern Baptists to stand up for their beliefs, they can't take a stand on a number of issues because they don't all think alike and no group, convention, association or local church could speak for all 12.3 million Southern Baptists.

Another said that Southern Baptists should get involved only in politics involving "moral things" and should never forget their commitment to evangelism.

While issues that greatly affect Christians are frequently decided in the political arena, Hullum's article continues, Baptists tend to know too little about most issues. Part of the reason for this, the article says, is that Southern Baptists are not convinced they have political power.

The magazine observes that Southern Baptists may or may not have political power of magnitude but quotes C. Welton Gaddy of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission (CLC): "It's the nature of power that it's not real until it's exercised."

Home Missions also observes that Southern Baptists appear to be frightened of power.

Traditionally, it notes, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But Gaddy, director of Christian citizenship development for the CLC, argues, along with others, that such an attitude misunderstands the nature of Christian love, which, he says, is "gutsy love, not sentimental emotion. Power," Gaddy insists, "is amoral--it can be used for good or bad."

"Christians must be busy reordering society through sound and appropriate political action," says Brooks Hays, the 75-year old former U. S. Congressman and former SBC president from Arkansas. "We must be busy building an environment in which justice prevails

and which makes victory in the Christian struggle more likely."

A careful reading of state and national Baptist convention records reveals that Baptists' use of political power has been characterized by inconsistency, insensitivity to misuse and self-serving motivations, says Gaddy.

He believes part of Southern Baptists' problem in dealing with politics is they haven't thought through the misuse of power--especially the power of silence.

"There are times," he says, "when failure to speak carries as much of a message as speaking out." And many times, Gaddy adds, "we don't involve ourselves until an issue hits us personally."

"The alternative to Christian commitment--first at the ballot box, then within government itself--is to leave the running of the land to the wisdom of unbelievers," says Foy Valentine, Gaddy's boss at the Christian Life Commission. "This is absolutely unacceptable."

The reason Christians should be involved in politics at every level, adds Gaddy, is that "faith does make a difference in the political process."

"The nature of our concerns is different; our priorities focus upon people, not things. The Christian philosophy, recognizing that laws were made for men, not men for laws, supports legislation that dignifies men and glorifies Jesus Christ."

"The church is concerned with pointing direction, not issuing directives," Gaddy says. "We have expertise in Christian morality, which makes us capable of passing value judgments on the ends projected as well as the means to accomplish them."

"The Christian is never without a sense of the presence of God, which gives security, stability and hope," Gaddy says.

"And those are qualities that can make a difference, in our city, our state, our nation, our world," he concludes.

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Samford Gets \$1 Million
Gift for Law School

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BIRMINGHAM(BP)--Samford University has received a \$1 million challenge gift with which to begin a \$3 million fund-raising effort in behalf of its Cumberland School of Law.

The gift, from an anonymous donor, was announced here along with plans for a campaign, which was necessitated by Cumberland's rapid growth over the past few years. The law school, which attracts students from more than 30 states, is reportedly the largest law school at a Baptist institution in the world, enrolling some 700 students last year. Founded in 1847 as part of Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tenn., the law school joined Samford in 1961.

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