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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 10, 1983

83-23

1980's Demand New Identity  
For SBC, According To StarkesBy Michael Tutterow 114

PALM COAST, Fla. (BP) -- A seminary professor has challenged Southern Baptists to carve a new denominational identity for the 1980s which would place equal emphasis on Christian social ministries, social action and evangelism.

Speaking at the national meeting of state Christian social ministries directors, Tommy Starkes, associate professor of Christian ministries and world religions at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, asserted that "missions is as much crying out against injustice as it is evangelism."

But Starkes charged Southern Baptists have depended on political trends rather than the Bible to determine the denomination's involvement in social ministries and social action. He cited Baptists' slow response to racial issues in the 1960s as exemplary of how civil rights legislation shaped Baptist action instead of the Bible.

"The Bible has more to say about redemption in the whole sense that it does about 'soul-winning,'" Starkes said, adding that the latter term was not biblical and the Bible does not separate spiritual and physical needs.

"Anything that dehumanizes another human being is Christ's enemy," he continued. "The total biblical witness calls for both personal evangelism and social ministry and social action. There is more biblical evidence for doing social ministry than there is for our traditional evangelism."

Even though Southern Baptist conservatives preach "a selective canon" by emphasizing an "individualistic salvation," the gospel has implications for society as well as individuals, he said. "Social action is the consequence of evangelism, a bridge to evangelism, a partner of evangelism."

Starkes also charged "liberals aren't liberal enough when it comes to practice," and "a lot of people have the Spirit and Jesus but don't help people."

Starkes said the rise in unemployment and other economic factors are dividing Americans into two camps--the haves and the have nots--which necessitates that Southern Baptists do more than talk to address economic concerns.

M. Wendell Belew, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's missions ministries division, echoed Starkes sentiments and claimed the problems of poverty and unemployment "will not pass with economic improvement." Belew said Baptists are just now realizing the "shock" of unemployment as middle-income families are hit by "the devastating force" of the economic crunch.

The "new poor" have been especially hard-hit, Belew said, either because pride or lack of awareness prevents them from seeking aid from social services. He called on Baptists to seek out unemployed church members and offer them both economic and personal support.

But assisting the unemployed must go beyond helping people find food to putting people back to work, he said. "We can create work, not to occupy people's time but because we are joint creators with God, we will be able to create new and meaningful employment," said Belew. "Together we can find answers."

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Starkes predicted the decade of the 1980s would see more "continuing crisis of hermeneutics," with Christian social ministries ranking second to evangelism in the resulting dichotomy. "It's easier to measure ticket-to-heaven evangelism than in-depth relationships," Starkes lamented.

Rex Lindsay, executive director of Kansas-Nebraska Baptist Convention, added Baptists must stop their theological bickering and do what the Bible says. "Truth," he explained, "is not propositional; it is personal. Unless people see us loving one another, the gospel will have little power."

Using demographic data, Starkes updated CSM directors on trends of the 1980s, and said needs in the next decade will necessitate Southern Baptist cooperation with other denominations. He cited a letter abhorring nuclear war being drafted by Catholic bishops as an example of how Baptists "can learn from our Catholic friends about making social pronouncements as a group."

Increases in the number of refugees and immigrants entering the United States in the next decade should merit Southern Baptists' concern, Starkes pointed out, calling on Baptists to become advocates for illegal aliens "on the basis that they're human beings for whom Christ died and not on the basis of their citizenship."

To make the gospel credible to the world during the 1980s, Southern Baptists also will have to adopt new lifestyles which show sensitivity to the world's poor, he said.

Starkes paraphrased the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, inserting American consumers into the role of the rich man and persons from Third World countries as the helpless beggar, and concluded judgement will fall on thoughtless consumers who do not heed the biblical mandates of Moses and Jesus to care for the poor.

"What we do in America is costing us in our witness to the world," Starkes said. "Americans spend enough money buying (junk) food to feed the people of the three largest nations in South America. As we sensitize people to private ministry, let us also sensitize them to global hunger."

Starkes challenged Southern Baptists to redefine their concept of missions and view social ministries, social action and evangelism as a uniform approach to ministry.

"Missions is the church doing its work," Starkes concluded. "It's God using human instruments to bring the kingdom to every facet of life."

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Valentine Commends  
Hunger Relief Offerings

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists are to be highly commended for giving record contributions of \$5,553,984 to help alleviate hunger worldwide and domestic, in 1982, says Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission.

The Foreign Mission Board has reported receiving \$5,283,783 for world hunger and the Home Mission Board received \$250,200.62 for domestic hunger. These figures do not include substantial funds given for hunger that were put to use in local churches, associations, and state conventions.

The 1982 contributions represent an overall increase of \$1,093,134 above 1981. FMB gifts increased \$988,783; HMB giving was up \$104,340.

"As we rejoice and give thanks for this highly encouraging report, we pause to thank all concerned Southern Baptists who last year responded to the biblical mandate to feed the hungry," he said.

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"High commendation also is due those SBC agencies whose concerned involvement in last year's special World Hunger emphasis made this encouraging report possible. Without the caring commitment and financial cooperation of the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, the Sunday School Board, the Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood Commission, last year's special hunger emphasis and this resulting response would not have been possible," Valentine said.

The Christian Life Commission, which carries the SBC assigned responsibility for informing Southern Baptists about world hunger and for providing support materials for educational projects related to hunger, coordinated the distribution of world hunger packets to more than 42,000 pastors and other church leaders prior to World Hunger Day in 1982.

"We are especially grateful to the state Baptist papers and to the curriculum editors of SBC agency publications as well as to many others for giving excellent coverage of this issue prior to World Hunger Day and for providing high visibility on an ongoing basis for this immensely important moral concern," Valentine said.

"This 1982 record level of giving to hunger causes at home and abroad is a moving testimony to the compassionate commitment of Southern Baptists to work together in Jesus' name to feed the hungry," Valentine concluded.

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Baptist Medical Center  
Embezzlement Investigated

Baptist Press  
2/10/83

ATLANTA (BP)--A possible forgery/embezzlement involving personnel payroll at Georgia Baptist Medical Center has been uncovered. Grand jury indictments are expected soon.

Administrator Robert L. Zuwald said at least \$100,000 was involved in a payroll padding scheme. The hospital is bonded and will be reimbursed for all losses when the case is fully investigated and settled. Zuwald said he was not free to discuss details of the case while it is under investigation.

"We are constantly on the alert for any irregularity in any phase of our operation," Zuwald said. "With over 2,000 employees and a payroll of over \$2 million a month, it is a complex operation. That's why we are fully bonded." As soon as possible discrepancies were spotted in January, Zuwald contacted the Atlanta Police Department which conducted the investigation.

Zuwald said, "It appears only one or two employees were involved. It is limited to one department. We can say no more until investigations are completed." He assured Georgia Baptists no patient funds or funds for charity work at the hospital have been misused or will be affected due to protection of financial bonding.

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CORRECTION----In Baptist Press release "New Orleans Trustees Elect Two Profs, Name Two Emeriti" on Feb. 8, 1983, please make two changes. In the seventh paragraph, Washburn's first name is "Al". Also please substitute the following two paragraphs for the first two paragraphs.

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Two longtime members of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary faculty, V.L. Stanfield and John Olen Strange, have been granted emeriti status by the seminary board of trustees.

Stanfield retired as professor of preaching last July and Strange retired Dec. 31.

Thanks,

Baptist Press

Timely Drought Relief Earns  
Respect For Shunned Churches

ALUBAREN, Honduras (BP)--A helping hand to needy neighbors produced respect and increased attendance for two small Baptist churches in a mountainous region of Honduras.

When drought all but eliminated the local harvest, church members began helping the neighbors who had despised them. As a result, Baptists no longer are shunned but are respected. Church attendance has climbed.

The situation developed when the customary June rains failed to come last year.

The 12,000 residents of this strongly anti-evangelical area of the Reitoca/Alubaren mountains watched helplessly as their young bean and corn plants dried up. Their harvest of corn--the local staple--amounted to less than 10 percent of the normal crop.

Members of the two Baptist churches decided to try to help. They asked for funds from the Baptist Convention's Commission of Social Ministries and personally contributed \$75--equivalent to an average monthly wage. The commission responded with a program to provide food and work, designed by Larry Elliott, Southern Baptist missionary from Virginia.

The Foreign Mission Board provided \$7,573 in hunger relief funds for the project.

Workers repaired major roads and a school building and built a fence for a health center. Each worker received a day's wages in beans, rice, salt and lard plus an booklet of scripture passages, "The Life of Jesus."

Different men worked each week so the program could benefit as many people as possible. The two small churches supervised the program locally, according to Jim Palmer of Georgia, coordinator of Christian Social Ministries for the Southern Baptist mission in Honduras.

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Harry Hollis Lauds  
New Family Panel

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press  
2/10/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Southern Baptist family life specialist has applauded the formation of a temporary Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Establishment of the new committee provides an opportunity at the national level to focus on the growing crisis in family life, said Harry N. Hollis Jr., associate executive director and director of family and special moral concerns for the SBC Christian Life Commission.

The select committee, approved 312-69, will not process legislation but will make a comprehensive review of problems encountered by children, youth and families and issue findings and recommendations to the various standing House committees now responsible for legislation affecting the nation's families.

Currently 13 of the 22 standing House committees have jurisdiction over issues affecting children, youth and families but backers say the new panel will provide a mechanism to coordinate action in these areas.

"I urge members of this committee to recognize that families are the future of our nation," Hollis said, "and I urge them to deal not only with ways to help troubled children, youth and families, but also to seek ways to prevent trouble from occurring in the first place."

The 25-member committee, chaired by Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., will review current laws and prospective legislation in broad areas affecting children, youth and families, including income maintenance, health, nutrition, education, welfare, employment and recreation.

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Seminary Student Turns  
Empty Cans Into Food, Fuel

By Bob Stainback

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Dennis Testerman is turning empty cans into food and heat for those who are short on both.

Testerman, a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, has founded P.R.E.A.C.H.--Please Recycle Empty Aluminum Cans Here--to collect the empty soft drink cans on campus, take them in for recycling and channel the money received to the poor through agencies dealing with food and fuel problems. In addition to helping the poor, some waste disposal problems are solved.

The idea is simple, but organizing and maintaining it are not. Testerman, from Roanoke, Va., has a sincere concern for the environment and enjoys being outdoors where he says he has felt closest to God. He decided to attend seminary while on a back-packing trip and as a journeyman missionary spent two years in Nigeria working in agricultural missions.

Testerman feels Christian involvement in conservation and recycling should be motivated not only by the example of Jesus Christ in ministering to "the least of these," but also by Biblical teachings on the proper stewardship of all resources: our time, as well as physical and financial resources.

"Aluminum and glass are made of non-renewable resources, so our wise use of them is essential to their continued availability. And our forest resources, though renewable, are being strained by an increasing demand for paper," he said. "Disposal of these resources in a landfill is not only poor stewardship of land, but of labor and energy as well."

Southeastern Seminary's student council has voted support for the campus program, which includes special receptacles near vending machines.

Testerman believes many church members would participate in a recycling effort if one were accessible and convenient for them. "The local church, as a body of Christ, is an obvious center for this practice of stewardship," he pointed out. "Sister churches in every denomination already serve as examples and stand as ready sources of advice on the methods of setting-up a recycling project."

In addition to cans, he believes glass and paper could easily be worked into the project. He's already talked with members of the Wake Forest Baptist Church and expects a program to start there early in 1983.

Testerman is concerned many Christians seem to think of hunger as something "over there," and not as a real problem in all parts of America. But, he insists, "We preach by our lifestyle as well as by our words."

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(Bob Stainback is a student at Southeastern Seminary.)