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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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83-46

Authentic Christian Life
Links Fruits, Roots: CLC

By Craig Bird

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Authentic Christian discipleship--which links the roots and fruits of Christian living--was discussed by 13 speakers at the annual Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission seminar.

More than 900 registrants from 23 states participated in discussions on the basic style and thrust of discipleship, including concern for the plight of the unemployed in America, hungry people around the world and the threat of nuclear war.

Don Harbuck, pastor of First Baptist Church in El Dorado, Ark., defined Christian living in the modern world as "getting back to the basics" of servanthood. "Servanthood and submission belong to a whole circle of ideas in the New Testament ethic," Harbuck said.

"Jesus, who lived among us as one who serves...summons us to do the same. His nail-scarred hands still hold the basin and the towel...."

Each speaker agreed on that point although their approach to the specific ways Christians should answer that summons varied widely.

Donald Shriver, a Presbyterian theologian and president of Union Theological Seminary in New York said, "You don't have to be a theologian to realize that Christian ethics and the ethics of Christians are often far apart," he said. "Imagine what the American 'earth' could be if all the church members in the United States were really the 'salt of the earth.'"

He stressed Christians should consider themselves, first of all, citizens of God's kingdom. "If scripture comes to embody the glory of Western civilization or the glory of democracy, it will no longer embody the glory of God."

While admitting, "salty" Christians can easily "fall into the habit of rubbing against each other's grains," Shriver reminded his audience Christians are called to defend the poor and the disenfranchised "because politicians don't pay much attention to people without power." Followers of Jesus are called to love everyone--"even the Russians"--and, while being careful "to make a distinction between God's will and our principles" Christians should "be the first to request legislation for special interest groups--those who will die if we don't act."

Jim Wallis, founding pastor of the Sojourners community, called for Christians to realize that U.S. warheads would destroy, "not just God-less communists but would also fall on women and children and on thousands of Russian Christians with whom we share a common faith and a common Lord."

He noted parallels between the current situation and the bombing of Nagasaki, when the target for Roman Catholic Christians on the bombing crew was the spire of the Roman Catholic cathedral in the center of town.

"How have we come this far?" he asked. "We have come this far by 'not' looking into the faces of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and at the people we now call our enemies."

He said a Bible with every reference to protecting the poor and every verse commanding God's people to be peacemakers cut out, "would be a Bible literally in tatters, a Bible full of holes, a Bible which would not hold together.

Robert H. Schuller, television personality and senior pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif., declared his "theology of self-esteem" can "become a solid base" to confront social problems. "The failure of the church to redeem society after it has redeemed lost souls is more a judgement on a non-integrated, unsystematic theology than on the sinfulness and stubbornness and insecurity of its converts."

Christians must accept the vital link that God intends, Schuller said, between a "salvation from hell to heaven theology" and an authentic "war-is-wrong" or "racism-is-a-sin" theology.

Charles Swindoll, pastor of First Free Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, Calif., and author of the bestselling books, *Improving Your Serve* and *Strengthening Your Grip*, argued there is no place in Christianity for a "star system."

"Jesus didn't attempt to change the Gentile system but he told his disciples, 'Among you it is not so.... The first shall be last and the greatest shall be your servant.' It is okay for the NBA to have Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul Jabbar. There is nothing in the Bible to forbid superstars in athletics or entertainment or any part of the secular world," he stressed "But the Bible makes it very clear there is no place for such a hierarchy among Christians."

"The church is the perfect place to play politics for you can do it all in the name of Jesus," he continued. "I challenge you to stop it!" Even though Christians tend to see Paul as a superstar, scripture doesn't support that either, he said. "When Paul got through preaching the people didn't say, 'Wow, Paul,' they said, 'Wow, Jesus.'"

Gordon Kingsley, president of William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., urged Christians to "swallow the whole Gos-Pill," keeping the personal half that changes individuals while also swallowing the social half that changes society.

Baptist pioneers did swallow the whole thing, he said, which is why they had such impact on their communities and culture. Southern Baptists today need to work for social solutions to grave moral problems alongside our unfaltering commitment to personal evangelism, he said.

Art Simon, executive director of Bread for the World, one of the major private anti-hunger organizations in the world, provided a specific example: "We know what to do when one person is hungry, but what do we do when hundreds of millions of people are hungry? We cannot lick the problem of hunger through private efforts alone. We must seek essential government interventions because of the magnitude of the problem and the nature of the problem."

He viewed the call to discipleship as a call to Christian citizenship. "If there is a political will, we can put an end to world hunger within a generation," he said. "What hungry people need more than charity is justice."

Eleanor Nutt shared her personal religious journey since her husband Grady died in an airplane crash last year: "When Grady died both of us were in the painful yet growing process of learning to set limits for ourselves and finding a balance between giving and taking."

Gladys S. Lewis, a former missionary nurse and a trustee of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, spoke on moral development in the family; Richard Foster, a professor at Friends University in Wichita, Kan., discussed "Fasting--Twentieth Century Style," and Bill Leonard, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, spoke on the treasure of discipleship Christians hold in "earthen vessels."

A special performance of "Cotton Patch Gospel," a musical drama featuring actor Tom Key and music by the late Harry Chapin, was presented to a capacity crowd of seminar participants. The drama, based on Clarence Jordan's Cotton Patch version of the gospels, was given a sustained standing ovation.

In summary, W. David Lockard, seminar director, told participants the authentic Christian discipleship which had been called for throughout the seminar was the same clear and strong refrain of Matthew 25 in which Jesus says, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these you have done it unto me."

Drastic World Change Demands
New Strategies, Says Anderson

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Christian churches and missionaries must rethink their whole approach to world missions in the light of changes shaking the roots of church and society, according to mission expert Gerald Anderson.

Whatever the gloom-and-doom forecasts and the pronouncements of futurologists, "it's pretty hard to escape the conviction that the remaining years of the 20th century are going to be a time of enormous ferment and flux in our societies and in our churches as well," Anderson told a Southern Baptist state student directors meeting at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Anderson, former president of Scarritt College in Nashville, Tenn., and a United Methodist missionary and seminary dean in the Philippines, now directs the Overseas Ministries Study Center in Ventnor, N.J. The non-denominational missions think tank annually attracts some 400 missionaries from 40 agencies for conferences and research.

There's good news for Christians about the world, Anderson said: 1.4 billion of the planet's 4.2 billion people "claim or are claimed" to be Christians, more than double the total of the beginning of the century. Another third of the population has heard the gospel. Nearly 250,000 Christian missionaries work worldwide and an "explosion" of Bibles, Christian literature and broadcasts is rumbling on every continent.

But a third of the world has probably never heard of Jesus Christ, Anderson said, and despite the heroic efforts of generations of missionaries, the Christian segment of world population has actually decreased from 34 percent to 32 percent since 1900. Moreover, secularism, materialism, communism and the inroads of other religions have turned "Christian" regions like Europe and North America into mission fields.

Christians in the west must also act on the following realities, according to Anderson:

--The church's shift south. "Christianity is becoming massively accepted as the religion of the developing countries in the so-called Third World," the missiologist said. One estimate counts 16,000 new believers each day in Africa, while daily 7,000 nominal church members in Europe and North America abandon the faith. As the early church shifted ethnically from Jewish to Gentile and geographically from the Mediterranean north to Europe, so it is now moving south to Latin America, Africa and southern Asia. By the year 2000 nearly 60 percent of all Christians may live in the third world.

Anderson said church leaders should accept the shift and rejoice in its possibilities. Too many Christian institutions, he claimed, are still dominated by a "North Atlantic tribalistic mentality which assumes that everything of importance in church history...has happened somewhere between Rome and Berkeley, Calif."

--Increasing religious pluralism. Islam is not only renewing itself in the Middle East; it is the third most popular religion in the United States with 4 million adherents. In France there are more Moslems than Protestants, and an army of Moslem missionaries is spreading its faith throughout Europe and Africa.

Christians must drop their stereotypes of Islam and other traditional and "new" religions and engage in witness through contact and dialogue, according to Anderson.

--Economic upheaval. Anderson called the impact of inflation and devaluation on mission dollars "horrific." A six percent annual inflation rate will send the cost for supporting a missionary family overseas to more than \$100,000 by the end of the century, one mission agency predicts.

"I believe the role of the foreign missionary is inherent to the nature of the gospel. I'm not calling for any moratorium on missionaries. All I'm asking myself is to rethink structures and strategies in terms of effectiveness and stewardship."

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One answer is an ever-growing partnership and cooperation with Christians of the developing world. Anderson declared the sending of some 15,000 missionaries from 58 Third World countries as "the great new fact" of modern missions.

--Authoritarian governments. Nearly every Third World country suffers either rightist or leftist oppression, Anderson claimed. The real concern for Christians in such countries is "not only salvation, but struggle, survival and social justice for all of God's people."

Anytime Christians or missionaries "prosper and profit" where human rights are violated, dissidents are tortured and other Christians are persecuted, "We should reassess what we are doing," Anderson said, "especially to determine whether we are to any extent 'baptizing' the authoritarian regime in order to benefit or gain special privileges from it."

--Continuing poverty. Half of the people on earth are poor and a billion live in "absolute" poverty (the World Bank's designation for those who subsist on \$75 a year or less). In a "global village" of 100 people, Anderson illustrated, 70 people would be illiterate, 50 would suffer malnutrition, 80 would live in substandard housing, and six would be Americans grasping more than half of the town's total wealth.

Poverty and oppression have caused the rise of "liberation theology" in Latin America and elsewhere, he said. Liberation theology calls Christians to change social and political structures that keep most people poor and a few rich.

Under questioning Anderson affirmed that Christians can legitimately differ over how much missionaries can or should involve themselves in the socio-political battles of their host countries. (Southern Baptist foreign missionaries maintain political neutrality.) Martyrdom, evangelism, dialogue, social ministry and social action are all forms of Christian witness, he said.

"I'm a firm believer that we have something to learn from each other and that we need each other," Anderson said. "There are different dimensions of witness and they aren't mutually exclusive.... Each has its own integrity."

"I believe Christ is saying today, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, come out to me, and together we will go into the world.'"

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Nashville Executive Gives
\$2 Million To U. of Richmond

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The University of Richmond has been given \$2 million by Mr. and Mrs. W. Dortch Oldham.

He is a Nashville business executive who is a trustee and former student of the University. Oldham is a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville.

The gift, the second largest financial commitment from an individual donor in the history of the university, will be used to initiate a new merit scholarship program to be known as the Oldham Scholars Program.

The gift was announced by UR President E. Bruce Heilman, who said the Oldham gift will be used to enhance educational opportunities for exceptionally bright, able students "who possess the clear potential to become effective leaders in the broader society."

Oldham attended the University of Richmond through 1941, financing his education by selling Bibles, dictionaries and encyclopedias in the small communities of the Northeast and South for a Nashville publishing firm, Southwestern, Inc. Later he became president of this firm when he acquired the controlling interest.

He has been a trustee of the University of Richmond since 1972.

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Public Funds May Taint
Church's Vision, Wood Says

WACO, Texas (BP)--Churches today risk "compromising their religious vision" when they seek public funds for their private schools, James E. Wood Jr. says.

Speaking at a Baylor University conference on "Religion, the State and Education," Wood said the most serious issue facing churches today is not whether church schools should accept public funds, but whether the schools should "claim any religious identity" once they do.

It is "foreign to the American experience" to expect public assistance without public controls, he added. It also is "contrary to the guarantees of the First Amendment" for religious schools to expect public subsidy, he said.

Church-related schools have sought public funds for programs which they claim benefit children rather than advance religious goals. These requests have reached "unprecedented proportions" and are not in the best interests of religious education, he warned.

Legal opposition to these requests had led to fear of an official "secular religion," Wood said. The Supreme Court has publicly denied that the state favors a "religion of secularism," he added.

Just as church schools must recognize the need to maintain their religious integrity, public schools must recognize that religion is a legitimate field of study, he continued.

Public education is not complete without the study of religion, he said. "The times increasingly require that full recognition be given to the academic study of religion in the public schools. Placing the study of religion within the existing curriculum is essential to the integrity of public education."

Wood is former director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C. He now directs the J.M. Dawson Studies in Church and State at Baylor.

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McCall Challenges Baptists
To Listen To Third World

Baptist Press
3/24/83

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A busy year of crisscrossing the globe as president of the Baptist World Alliance has reinforced Duke McCall's conviction that Southern Baptists need to talk less and listen more.

"Of all the Baptist bodies in the world who need to listen for a while, Southern Baptists take first place," he comments. "We have many who talk so loud and so well, but we fail to listen." McCall, chancellor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, points out that beyond Southern Baptist life "a whole world of relationships" exists.

To help foster those relationships, he completed an itinerary last year that included trips to Cuba, Switzerland, Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, eastern Africa and Brazil.

Although he was elected BWA president in 1980, McCall had postponed most of the trips to assure a smooth transition in leadership at Southern Seminary. He retired as seminary president Feb. 1, 1982, after 30 years in that office.

One of his concerns as BWA president has been to bring Third World Baptists "into the mainstream of world Baptist life." The "old-line" distinction between missionary "sending" and "receiving" nations no longer applies, he says.

"Today's great revivals are not among the Caucasians of North America or Europe," he notes. "If you want the people involved in revival, go to Tanzania, Korea, Brazil, even Asiatic Russia.

"They have something to give."

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