



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 4, 1988

88-56

'Transforming Faith' Needed  
In Modern Society: McSwain

N-CO  
By Marv Knox

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Committed Christians in modern society need "transforming faith" if they are to make an impact on their world, sociologist Larry L. McSwain told 500 ministers.

That faith must be bold enough to criticize the world and hopeful enough to dream of life as God desires it, said McSwain, dean of the School of Theology and professor of church and community at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

McSwain addressed "The Committed Christian in a Modern Society" during the Southern Baptist Witnessing-Giving Life seminar at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center in late March. Witnessing-Giving Life will be the next phase of Planned Growth in Giving, the convention's ongoing stewardship/enrichment campaign.

Today's Christians live in a "modern" society, he said. Science and technology present them with "a host of options," and they encounter "a host of competing viewpoints" as they seek to live out God's will in a complex world.

"The great challenge to the Christian today is not the assault of a secular world threatening to take away faith, but the temptation of a modern world which simply relativizes all forms of faith," thus denying belief in faith that is firm, absolute and secure, he said.

The modernization of society has had four primary effects upon the Christian, he noted: the challenge to personal values; the loss of power of "soft" institutions such as the family, school, local community and church; the rise of individual religion; and the secularization of the church.

Concerning personal values, McSwain said: "Biblical Christians have always asserted the importance of personhood in making ethical choices. ... The maintenance of such traditions is becoming increasingly difficult in a culture where such values (as care for the poor and minorities) are challenged and new values are affirmed."

He cited 20 sets of statistics that revealed how traditional Christian values have lost ground in American society. "We can hurt over these statistics, but to ignore them is to fail to apply Christian love and forgiveness," he stressed.

The second consequence of modernization, the loss of power of the "soft" institutions, is at the hands of the "hard" institutions -- the corporation and the government, he said: "When we are cut off from the power of the family, the church and the local community to shape our values, we become pawns in the dominating power of the large-scale institutions. To live in the modern world is ... to live in the shadow of huge bureaucracies against which the small institutions and individuals seem insignificant.

When the hard institutions re-shape Christians' value systems, churches turn from what God wants and speak with a weak voice, he claimed: "Both hard institutions blunt our preaching of the biblical truth. We may know 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' but General Motors and Washington, D.C., do not."

Despite the detriments of diminished values and a weakened church, the greatest threat to the church is the rise of "militant religiosity," McSwain said: "The impact of modernity upon faith is to allow the individual to choose whatever faith is relevant to one's individual needs. Thus the institutions of religion become consumer-oriented structures which must appeal to the marketplace of the religious in order to grow and have any power."

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That consumer orientation leads churches to fall for the temptation of secularism, which "offers for the church to embrace the value system of its culture to succeed," he said. "Thus the church loses its power to call individuals to a lifestyle which stands over against the dominant values of modernity because it is one of the institutions of modernity."

The cumulative result of these four effects of modernity is that "the modern world has left us without a center," McSwain explained. "The question is whether we can fashion a new kind of person of faith who can somehow stand against the negative features of modernity while calling forth a new power for the future."

The response to such a question poses three dilemmas for Christians, he said: withdrawal or involvement; individual or group action; and personal faith or institutional power. Either half of each dilemma is less than ideal, but choices are mandatory.

The advantage of withdrawal from the world "is that it is easier to identify the faithful and demand obedience from them," he said. But the disadvantage is a loss of effective evangelism, for Christians who take this stand "are more committed to the practice of their own purity than the conversion of souls to Jesus Christ."

On the other hand, involvement in the world involves both pluses and minuses, he added. The advantage is that the involved Christian addresses the world's needs and speaks its language. The liability is that purity of response is seldom possible from within the caldron of the world.

The dilemma of individual or group action pits the value of the person against the need for effectiveness, he said: "It takes a movement of people to attract attention in today's world. The individual who would have an impact upon the world must be an organizer of movements who can develop group action to bear witness to the Christian faith. ... If Southern Baptists are going to change the world, they must go forth organizationally."

The third dilemma, personal faith or institutional power, is similar. "Bigness is essential if any organization is to affect the trends of society," he noted, cautioning, "Individuals can be easily ignored, forgotten or overlooked."

The answer to the dilemmas and the antidote to the ill effects of modernity is "transforming faith," McSwain contended.

"Our present modern context is as favorable as any in history for the effective communication of the gospel," he said. "However, if we depend upon the structures of the modern world as the basis for doing our work, we shall find our work shallow and empty of meaning. In every cultural context, the Christian experience has to take shape as a result of the power of God."

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"In a kingdom-based identity, such a value is the personhood of individuals. A radical biblical theology of the kingdom is a radical valuing of persons, whatever may be the dominant valuing system of the culture. Thus a transforming Christian stance in the contemporary world would affirm the personhood of all without regard to sex, status, income or ethnicity."

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Campus Ministers  
To Reach Out, In

N-CO

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"Revival -- Reaching Out/Reaching In" will be the theme of the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers conference, to be held immediately prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. The campus ministers will meet on the campus of Trinity University.

"We hope our theme will tie into the theme of the convention's annual meeting as well as speak to us," said the organization's president, Arliss Dickerson. The SBC theme will be "Pour Out Revival."

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Southern Baptists provide ministry to students on 1,100 campuses across the country, Dickerson said. Up to 200 student ministers are expected to participate in the San Antonio meeting.

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Baptist Press  
4/4/88

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTERS  
Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas  
June 12-13, 1988

Theme: "Revival -- Reaching Out/Reaching In"

Sunday Afternoon, June 12, 1988

- 2:00 Registration
- 3:00 Welcome, announcements, introductions
- 3:15 Getting acquainted
- 3:30 Worship -- Charlie Baker, pastor, Southern Hills Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.
- 4:00 Professional pilgrimage -- Nell Magee, consultant, campus organization and program development, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville
- 4:15 "Being the Good News" -- Esther Burroughs, evangelism consultant, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta
- 4:45 "Southern Baptist Student Ministries Update" -- Charles Johnson, director, national student ministries department, Sunday School Board, Nashville
- 5:15 Adjourn
- 5:30 Dinner: Mexican fiesta

Sunday Evening, June 12

- 7:00 Worship -- Charlie Baker

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7:30 Professional pilgrimage -- Alton Harpe, Baptist campus minister, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.  
 7:45 "Future Trends ... Where Are We Headed?" -- Bill Pinson, executive director, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas  
 8:30 Break  
 8:45 Seminar I  
 9:30 Reception

Monday Morning, June 13

9:00 Worship  
 9:30 Professional pilgrimage -- Lynn Davis, Baptist Student Union director, Salisbury State College, Salisbury, Md.  
 9:45 Seminar II  
 10:30 Break  
 10:45 Dialogue with national student ministries department staff  
 11:15 Business meeting  
 12:15 Lunch

Monday Afternoon, June 13

1:15 "A Call to Forgiveness" -- Stan Allcorn, pastor, First Baptist Church, Commerce, Texas  
 1:45 Cluster groups  
 2:30 Adjourn

Banquet 7:00 p.m.

Dinner, awards, installation of officers  
 Entertainment -- Dennis Swanburg, pastor, First Baptist Church, Hot Springs, Ark.

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Baptist Educators  
 Form Book-Link

By Jim Burton

N- CO  
 (B'hood)

Baptist Press  
 4/4/88

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The National Fellowship of Baptist Educators has organized Book-Link to provide English-language Christian literature requested by Southern Baptist missionaries in the United States and abroad.

The national fellowship will act as a clearing-house to link requests and resources for Christian books and literature, said Hal Buchanan, national coordinator of the educators' fellowship.

Requests will come primarily from home and foreign missionaries, said Larry Cox, interim director of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men. The fellowship then will seek donors, and once a match is made, the donor will ship directly to the recipient.

Book-Link will complement several other projects including Books for the World, Inc., a Yazoo City, Miss., organization started by the late Owen Cooper. Books for the World provides secular textbooks for overseas classrooms. However, many of the requests are for Christian books and literature, Cox said.

Books for the World tested the demand for the new project through the June 1987 issue of Intercom, a monthly newsletter to missionaries published by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The announcement in Intercom resulted in more than 20 requests for books, ranging from doctrine to preaching.

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"Retired pastors who have extensive libraries could share what the Lord has given them and their books would live on to help develop new pastors," said Buchanan.

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The task now is to find donors who have books or are willing to acquire books requested through Book-Link. The organization particularly is interested in working with any age group in churches with Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union programs that are seeking a mission action project, Cox said.

Book-Link is the first major project of the educators' fellowship, formed Nov. 21, 1987, during the triennial meeting of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men.

"This project covers the gamut of all ages -- from children to senior adults -- who could become involved in a hands-on project that would have some tangible results right away," said Buchanan.

The National Fellowship of Baptist Educators is one of 14 fellowships under the umbrella of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men, a ministry of the adult division of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. Each seeks to help Southern Baptists use their vocational skills and avocational interests for home and foreign mission efforts.

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Family Fights Disease Together,  
Typifies Christian Home Theme

By Terri Lackey

F-55B

Baptist Press  
4/4/88

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)--Pozy Menhinick and her family stretch out regularly on a cold, metal table at a local clinic and allow the blood to seep slowly from their veins into a syringe.

The task is hardly an enjoyable one for Mrs. Menhinick, her husband, Ed, or their three children, Mark, 23; Eric, 21; and Kim, 18 -- especially Eric, who is not at all comfortable with the sight of a large needle meant for him.

But the members of the Menhinick family love each other, and the procedure of removing blood from their bodies is a necessary one in helping to eventually solve a rare blood complement disease from which Mrs. Menhinick suffers.

This family's commitment toward one another exemplifies the 1988 Southern Baptist Christian Home Emphasis theme of "Caring in Times of Family Crises." The annual emphasis, which begins on Mother's Day in May and concludes on Father's Day in June, is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

The meaning of the Christian Home Emphasis theme goes a step further, as do the Menhinicks, than caring within the family unit to a full-scale illustration of the Christian principle of caring for others during times of need. The Menhinicks are members of University Hills Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

Mrs. Menhinick explained her blood complement disease is forbiddingly complicated and extremely rare. It can affect the body's immune system.

Because the disease is so rare, the members of her immediate family, including her 88-year-old father, 80-year-old mother and her brothers and sisters, are a valuable find to doctors who hope one day to solve the inner workings of the disease. Staff at the Nalle Clinic in Charlotte, where the Menhinicks live, and at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Md., are working together to study the blood complement problem.

"The doctors think it has something to do with genetics, and in fact, think it came to me through my father. My doctor was thrilled to find out my parents were still alive," Mrs. Menhinick said.

Her family is steadfast in their commitment to help not only themselves, but others, including those who already have or someday might inherit this disease, she said. Their Christian caring is proven by their relentless trips to the clinic.

A crisis within a family can be defined as "anything bad that happens to you," said Gary Hauk, manager of the family enrichment section in the family ministry department.

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"It can be anything from unemployment to rejection on a date to 'My jeans are dirty,'" Hauk said, adding crises occur most often in the areas of health; money; catastrophes, such as automobile accidents and house fires; or relationship problems.

"We want church members to be aware of how they can care in times of crises when the lives of a church family fall apart," he said. "We want them to ask, 'How can my family care for, support, nurture and listen to that member who is hurting?'"

Church members can learn the difference between careless, carefree or careful exhibition of concern for others through the "Caring in Times of Family Crises: A Church Planning Guide for Christian Home Emphasis" and an accompanying church training Equipping Center module, Hauk said.

"Through this book and module, we want to try to sensitize a church member to a person's grief, and help him or her know how to minister carefully," he noted. The Christian Home Emphasis literature also teaches families how to minister to grieving fellow members as a family unit.

"Our children are never too young to learn to minister," he said.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

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The task is hardly an enjoyable one for Mrs. Menhinick, her husband, Ed, or their three children, Mark, 23; Eric, 21; and Kim, 18 -- especially Eric, who is not at all comfortable with the sight of a large needle meant for him.

But the members of the Menhinick family love each other, and the procedure of removing blood from their bodies is a necessary one in helping to eventually solve a rare blood complement disease from which Mrs. Menhinick suffers.

This family's commitment toward one another exemplifies the 1988 Southern Baptist Christian Home Emphasis theme of "Caring in Times of Family Crises." The annual emphasis, which begins on Mother's Day in May and concludes on Father's Day in June, is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

The meaning of the Christian Home Emphasis theme goes a step further, as do the Menhinicks, than caring within the family unit to a full-scale illustration of the Christian principle of caring for others during times of need. The Menhinicks are members of University Hills Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

Mrs. Menhinick explained her blood complement disease is forbiddingly complicated and extremely rare. It can affect the body's immune system.

Because the disease is so rare, the members of her immediate family, including her 88-year-old father, 80-year-old mother and her brothers and sisters, are a valuable find to doctors who hope one day to solve the inner workings of the disease. Staff at the Nalle Clinic in Charlotte, where the Menhinicks live, and at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Md., are working together to study the blood complement problem.

"The doctors think it has something to do with genetics, and in fact, think it came to me through my father. My doctor was thrilled to find out my parents were still alive," Mrs. Menhinick said.

Her family is steadfast in their commitment to help not only themselves, but others, including those who already have or someday might inherit this disease, she said. Their Christian caring is proven by their relentless trips to the clinic.

A crisis within a family can be defined as "anything bad that happens to you," said Gary Hauk, manager of the family enrichment section in the family ministry department.

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"It can be anything from unemployment to rejection on a date to 'My jeans are dirty,'" Hauk said, adding crises occur most often in the areas of health; money; catastrophes, such as automobile accidents and house fires; or relationship problems.

"We want church members to be aware of how they can care in times of crises when the lives of a church family fall apart," he said. "We want them to ask, 'How can my family care for; support, nurture and listen to that member who is hurting?'"

Church members can learn the difference between careless, carefree or careful exhibition of concern for others through the "Caring in Times of Family Crises: A Church Planning Guide for Christian Home Emphasis" and an accompanying church training Equipping Center module, Hauk said.

"Through this book and module, we want to try to sensitize a church member to a person's grief, and help him or her know how to minister carefully," he noted. The Christian Home Emphasis literature also teaches families how to minister to grieving fellow members as a family unit.

"Our children are never too young to learn to minister," he said.

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