



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Leavell: Baptists might make Bold Mission Thrust a farce

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press  
2/3/93

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--Bold Mission Thrust may become a farce unless Southern Baptists change their lifestyles, Landrum Leavell, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said during the Alabama Baptist state evangelism conference.

"Back in 1976, we adopted the Bold Mission Thrust," Leavell said. "Folks, it's going to be the Bold Mission Farce if we don't make some changes."

Leavell, in his address during the Jan. 25-26 conference at Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, called on Southern Baptists to improve their giving, saying, "It's going to take a lifestyle change on the part of ... Southern Baptists. We're going to have to change our spending habits. We're going to have to change the way we invest our time. We're going to have to change our mindset ... . We're not going to get it done with business as usual."

Southern Baptists shouldn't have adopted Bold Mission Thrust in 1976, Leavell said. "I think we ought to have declared a couple of years of prayer and getting right with God and then launch a Bold Mission Thrust," he said.

"Maybe we started off on a cold motor," Leavell said, "but what are we going to do about it? Are we going to make any effort in these last remaining years of this century to fulfill this command of Jesus Christ?"

Leavell used as his biblical text the words of Jesus in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and spoke of Jesus' call for his disciples to be "fishers of men."

It's time for Southern Baptists "to fish or cut bait," Leavell said. "If we're fishers of men, we could say, following that same analogy, that the world is our ocean. That's our fishing hole. That's where we're doing business. And in that context, we would conclude that the church is a boat -- not a party boat, it's not a pleasure boat, it's not a gambling boat, but it's a working boat. Every person on board has a task to do and a responsibility."

Not all Christians can relocate to a distant mission field, Leavell said, but all have a duty to fulfill the Great Commission through tithes and offerings -- a duty being shirked by a large number of Southern Baptists, he said.

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"The statistics show that 20 percent of Southern Baptists give 80 percent of the money. Another 30 percent give the other 20 percent. And that means 50 percent of Southern Baptists, on the average in all of our churches, give nothing."

Leavell also decried the percentage of seminary students who stay in America after graduation. "One of the most startling statistics that I've heard in years," Leavell said, "Dr. Keith Parks shared with us over at the seminary one day. He said 5 percent of the world's population is over here in the United States of America, and 95 percent of our seminary graduates stay here to minister to 5 percent of the population. And 5 percent of our seminary graduates go to the 95 percent of the world to tell them the story of Jesus."

Calling for a renewed emphasis on the Cooperative Program, Leavell said this generation will decide "whether or not we continue to give and work cooperatively or whether the Southern Baptist Convention is going to be a conglomeration of independent churches, each one doing its own thing -- doing it unilaterally."

"Now there are some churches that can afford and do sponsor their own foreign missionaries," Leavell noted. "Now that's fine as far as those churches are concerned. But they can only support a handful."

No church on earth "can unilaterally commission, send out and support 3,900 foreign missionaries and about 4,500 home missionaries," Leavell said. "Look what we've been able to accomplish in developing the world's largest evangelical foreign missions movement -- and we've done it together cooperatively."

Pastors and other elected leadership are the key if Southern Baptists "break out of our stagnation in Cooperative Program giving" and "the static condition in our special offerings," Leavell said.

"There is no church in the Southern Baptist Convention that is doing more than its pastor leads it to do," Leavell said. "If your church is skinny in its cooperative missions giving, it's probably the leadership of the pastor, because it can be done with proper pastoral leadership. Most churches follow the leadership of their elected leaders."

Southern Baptists should elect leaders in associations, state conventions and the SBC "who will necessarily give more than lip service to cooperation and to Cooperative Program and missions support through all of our offerings. We won't see it happen without that," Leavell said.

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Southern Baptist missionaries  
to evacuate capital of Togo

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press  
2/3/93

LOME, Togo (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries planned to evacuate Lome, the capital city of Togo, Feb. 3 as a deepening political crisis fuels the spread of violence and civil unrest in the coastal city.

Most of the 14 career missionaries, their children and three International Service Corps workers planned to drive to Cotonou in the neighboring nation of Benin, reported mission chairwoman Ann White from her Lome home.

Two missionary couples, including White and her husband, Mark, a music evangelist, decided to drive to northern Togo, an area free of the unrest. They will stay with Southern Baptist missionaries there.

The latest wave of violence erupted Jan. 30 in Lome when government troops looted and burned the home of an opposition leader, according to press reports. That same day Togolese security forces reportedly killed at least six people, including two foreigners, when troops loyal to President Gnassingbe Eyadema rampaged through the city looting homes and businesses.

"The weekend (Jan. 30-31) of violence shocked us, but things have been tense for awhile," White said. "After meeting together we decided the wisest thing to do was leave (Lome) for a short time."

The missionaries could return in about a week if there are no additional flare-ups of violence and looting, she said.

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Lome's weekend unrest follows an incident Jan. 25 when government security forces fired into a crowd of 10,000 pro-opposition demonstrators and killed at least 20 people and wounded 25 to 35 people, according to reports.

Tension was already high in Togo because of the success of a three-month-old general strike. In mid-November a union of opposition parties campaigning to end Eyadema's 26-year rule shut down schools, shops, banks and government ministries. Most press reports say the strike shows no signs of weakening.

Many Togolese fear the current tension and violence could lead to a civil war similar to the one strangling Liberia. The bloody civil war in Liberia split along tribal lines with most combatants fighting out of ethnic loyalty rather than attempting to advance a certain political ideology.

Many in Togo, including missionaries, hope political talks Feb. 5 in Strasbourg, France, will steer Togo away from Liberia's fate. France and Germany proposed the Togolese government and opposition hold round-table talks at the European Parliament to solve the crisis.

"We're praying both sides will attend the talks," White said.

Many citizens in Lome have decided to wait on the talks' outcome elsewhere. As many as 25,000 people have fled the capital of 600,000 in recent days.

The killings and flood of refugees into neighboring Ghana, prompted Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings to put its armed forces on alert Feb. 2 along its eastern border with Togo. Eyadema has accused Ghana of meddling in Togo's internal affairs by supporting Togo opposition groups and has called Ghana's military alert a provocative act, according to press reports.

The next few weeks will determine how long the missionaries stay away from Lome, White concluded.

The Whites, both of Florence, Ala., planned to drive to Dapaong, Togo, and Frank and Melaney Dudley from Santa Rosa, Texas, and Shreveport, La., respectively, to Moretan, Togo.

Missionaries and their children leaving for Contonou, Benin, include Joe and Debbie Moss, from Marietta, Ga., and Black Mountain, N.C., respectively; Jim and Donna Shemwell, from Gary, Ind., and Cold Spring, Ky.; Randy and Kathy Arnett, from Oak Grove, Mo., and Charleston, Mo.; Larry and Martha Pritchett, from Irving, Texas, and Longview, Texas; Mary Katherine Campbell, from Abilene, Texas; and Paula Settle, from Owensboro, Ky.

Three International Service Corps workers, Ruby Patterson from Asheville, N.C., and Leslie and Ronda Brooks, both from Mobile, Ala., also will leave for Contonou.

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New Age movement reflects  
ancient problems, pastor says By J.B. Fowler Jr.

Baptist Press  
2/3/93

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--The New Age movement is "the manifestation of an old problem," said Michael Dean, a Fort Worth, Texas, pastor during New Mexico Baptists' evangelism conference.

Dean, pastor of Fort Worth's Travis Avenue Baptist Church, said the New Age movement is "a system of belief that has its roots in Eastern mystical religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism." Reincarnation, good works, evolution and communication with extraterrestrial beings are among New Age beliefs, he said.

The New Age movement's roots date back even to the Garden of Eden, Dean said. Reading from Genesis 3 where Satan told Eve she would become like God by eating the forbidden fruit, Dean said New Age philosophy teaches that "by expanding his knowledge, man can become God, and this is exactly the essence of the first temptation" that Adam and Eve faced.

"It is a very real problem today, particularly here in New Mexico which is a hotbed of the New Age movement," Dean said.

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The New Age movement's emphasis is not on buildings in which to assemble or worship, Dean said. "They will assemble in storefront buildings and teach their religion in public schoolrooms."

Although the rainbow is one of its symbols, there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow -- only a washed-out bridge leading to destruction, Dean asserted.

"A sterile spiritual environment has given the New Age movement a tremendous opportunity in America and it is growing phenomenally," Dean said.

New Agers use motivational success seminars and flood magazines with their philosophy, Dean said. Bantam Books has increased publication of New Age material tenfold in recent years, he declared, adding Forbes magazine recently reported 300 million magazines and tapes were sold in a recent year on how the mind controls the body, a tenet of the New Age philosophy.

Dean said the unifying person of the New Age movement in America -- perhaps its most popular adherent -- is actress Shirley MacLaine.

While it is a spiritual movement, it possesses no ultimate truth that rests in God, Dean declared. They teach that there is no evil, he said, and that mankind himself is divine -- man is God, creation is God, all is God.

Another key teaching, reincarnation, is the belief that a soul gravitates from one body to another in this life, Dean explained, and if a person is bad he or she will come back as a spider or a snake or some form of lower life.

MacLaine and other New Age adherents, Dean said, claim to receive guidance through "channelers," people long dead who are called on to give leadership and wisdom in life's decisions.

The basic doctrines of Scripture -- the blood atonement of Jesus Christ, heaven, hell, sin -- are all debunked by New Agers as an effort of Christians to keep "people in line," Dean said.

Be careful to watch the school classrooms for evidences of New Age teachings and methods, he warned. Teachers often are not even aware they are teaching New Age philosophies because of the "neutral" language of the movement, he said.

If the New Age philosophy really works as its adherents claim, lifting the lives of people to a higher and nobler level, Dean asked: Why is India, the very center of New Age teachings, so poverty-ridden? "Our people today need to recognize spiritual bologna when they see it," Dean said.

Lamenting that Shirley MacLaine, the most popular New Ager in America, was reared as a Southern Baptist in Virginia, Dean quoted MacLaine as having said, "My Baptist background never really influenced me."

The answer to the New Age philosophy, Dean said, is this: We must teach our people to cling to the gospel that magnifies the God of the Bible, the creator and sustainer of all. Also, "We must preach the gospel of the narrow gate and the narrow way," he said, noting salvation is found not in reincarnation in some other life, but only in the blood of Jesus Christ.

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Blankets, medical supplies  
en route to Bosnia from BWA

By Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press  
2/3/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--More than 15,000 blankets and \$200,000 in medical supplies and hygienic items are on their way to Bosnia, in a cooperative effort by the Baptist World Aid (BWAid) arm of the Baptist World Alliance, Brother's Brother Foundation, Mercy International and Church World Service.

Much of the aid will be channeled through My Neighbour, a Croatian Baptist humanitarian organization. Just after Christmas, My Neighbour received 18 containers of warm clothing from BWAid.

Assistance also has been given to Baptist relief groups in Serbia working to help displaced persons fleeing the fighting.

BWAid now is working on a possible shipment to Croatia to assist in the feeding of refugees and displaced peoples fleeing from the war zones.

Donations earmarked for BWAid efforts in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia may be sent to Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, VA 22101-6005.

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Singers renew sacred tradition  
at Southwestern Baptist Seminary By Susan Simko

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Growing up in a tiny Alabama town, Floyd Screws remembers well the sounds of Sacred Harp music.

Often, the entire population of Sardis, Ala., would take time out to continue the musical tradition brought to America by Pilgrims generations before. They would gather at the church, arrange their chairs in a hollow square, open their shaped-note song books and sing all day.

Screws only listened, never participating. Then World War II came, time passed and he moved to Texas. But Screws never forgot his roots.

"I don't know what struck me," he said Jan. 30 while waiting for the annual Sacred Harp singing to begin at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. "After 60, I just thought I should sing."

Southwestern has a special interest in Sacred Harp music because many of the most cherished Baptist hymns came from the tradition, said William J. Reynolds, professor of church music.

The music is based on four notes of the scale -- fa, sol, la and mi. Each note is shaped differently, making it easy to read and to teach, said Reynolds, one of Southern Baptists' foremost hymnody experts who organizes the Sacred Harp singing each year.

Screws, in renewing his ties to Sacred Harp music, went back to Alabama and Sardis Missionary Baptist Church. Only five people came. The tradition, it appeared, was dying.

So Screws went door to door with minutes from old Sacred Harp singings. The minutes, covering a span of nearly 60 years, listed the names of everyone who attended those singings. Nearly every person in the town could find a relative's name on the faded papers.

Screw's tactic worked, and last year 60 Sacred Harp singers crowded the Sardis church.

It's a tradition too precious to forget, Screws said. He regularly goes back to Alabama for singings and anywhere else a group gathers to keep the tradition alive. He traveled four hours from his home in Hughes Springs, Texas, to get join the singing at Southwestern Seminary.

"I've followed every singing I can in Texas," he said. "I sing it as a means of worshipping God. There's something about Sacred Harp singings. When you get in a group you just feel at home. There's a feeling that everyone's there to worship God."

Those who sat in the hollow square in the rotunda of Southwestern's school of church music building agreed.

Vivian Rogan has been a Sacred Harp singer 12 years and she brought her 7-year-old son to the Southwestern singing.

"I brought him for the tradition to continue," she said. "For us, it's a form of worship. That's why we want our child to continue it."

Sitting beside the veteran singers were people at their first-ever Sacred Harp singing. Southwestern music students Ray Smithee and Scott Duffer came out of curiosity. They had studied Sacred Harp in a seminary hymnology course.

"It's a part of our Baptist history," Smithee said. "It's a part of America."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.

**Christians must face challenge  
of hostile society, Dunn says**      **By Brian K. Smith**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The great challenge facing Christians -- and their churches and ministers -- "is to recover the biblical idea of what we are and who we are," said Ron Dunn, a Texas evangelist and author.

Dunn, president of LifeStyle Ministries in Irving, Texas, led New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's annual campus revival.

"Such biblical terms as exile, strangers and aliens fit the believer from the time of Abraham," Dunn said. "It means you have one culture and society plopped down in the center of another society.

"The real church is not welcome in this world, never has been and never will be," he said. The New Testament book of 1 Peter "is fast becoming one of the most relevant books in the New Testament because Peter wrote to Christians who were living in the midst of a pagan society. They were living in a hostile society and some were being persecuted."

Dunn also called on NOBTS students to be content. "Rich people jump out of windows every day; better windows, maybe, but they jump out of them every day.

"Do you know how God taught Paul (contentment)?" Dunn asked. "He reduced Paul to just having Jesus." While Paul was grateful for the money he received from churches, he was equally satisfied without it. "Having everything cannot take away the heartache," Dunn said, "and losing everything cannot take away the joy."

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Smith is a student writer at New Orleans Seminary. (BP) photos available upon request from the seminary.

**BWA issues prayer call  
for peace in Israel**

**Baptist Press  
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WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance is calling for prayer for peace and reconciliation in Israel which has deported more than 400 Palestinians from the occupied territories to Lebanon.

"We deplore expulsion of any person from any country," said Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary. "Reconciliation is necessary in this land where our Lord was crucified and continues to be crucified in the tragic alienation and hostility of all people."

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