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# Southern Baptists and the Issues of the Eighties

By Albert McClellan

Futurism is the most tenuous of sciences, and some think it is not a science at all. The best that can be done is to erect a series of hypotheses qualified by possible contingencies. Scholars in every field have been at work a long time doing this for the decade ahead. Most of their forecasts are based on trend studies. They do not often deal with future issues that are now hidden even from the most prophetic of scholars; and they do not always take into account the resourcefulness of human beings in coping with the impossible problems.

What will be the issues of the 1980s? How will Southern Baptists meet them? Perhaps it is too early to ask these questions, or perhaps they should not be asked at all since accurate assessment of the future in these frenzied times is unlikely. Two other questions may be easier answered. What were the issues of the 1970s? How did Southern Baptists meet them? Did they fully inform themselves? Did they grow in their responses? These are a few of the questions that could be considered in an investigation of depth.

In the decade of the 1970s there were hundreds of issues ranging from the Vietnamese war and Watergate to environmental protection and nuclear power to the detrimental uses of saccharin and tobacco. A sample listing is more manageable in thinking about Baptist response.

## The Issues of the 1970s

1. Declining energy and American wastefulness.
  2. Growing inflation with government and personal overspending.
  3. Increasing alcoholism and drug addiction.
  4. Family instability and sexual promiscuity.
  5. Personal de-motivation and some decline in willingness to take group responsibility as members or leaders.
  6. Graft in industry and government.
  7. Political indifference and uncertainty on the part of the people, and political irresponsibility and manipulation on part of leaders.
  8. Situational ethics and *laissez-faire* morality; the brutalizing and vulgarizing of public entertainment.
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# Tired of the eighties?

By Foy Valentine

A recent *New Yorker* magazine cartoon has one disgruntled old codger saying to another as they both look at a television ad, "You know something? I'm already tired of the eighties."

The new decade has indeed come in with a sigh for many. They are "already tired." One of the perils faced by sophisticated moderns is the temptation to turn from the wonder of the Christmas, from the song in the air and the star in the sky, and from the celebration of the New Year's excitement and new beginning with a jaded, "Ho hum."

But this is no time for boredom. The excitement and opportunities of these times challenge the very best that is in the people of God.

There are diverse, no doubt equally valid, ways to perceive the main ethical issues for the eighties. From my perspective, however, there are four overarching concerns to which our best attention must be given.

(1) Moral nihilism (that awful state of affairs in which neither religion nor the culture acknowledges any moral imperative) has been sweeping over the world like an all-pervading nerve gas; and only an unequivocal acceptance of God's unambiguous demands at the point of moral integrity will deliver us from ruin.

(2) War (the prospects in this nuclear age of violent aggression on an unprecedented scale, human agony and death and destruction of incalculable horror, and

apocalyptic holocaust in which the prophecy of the day "wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" [2 Peter 3:12] seem both plausible and imminent) is a major concern; and only the grace of God can bring us to the place where Christian peacemakers, doing "the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42) can bring the blessings of peace to the world.

(3) Economic turmoil (where the world's economic structures are shaken by inflation, battered by unemployment, undermined by low productivity, and assaulted by depression until they all cave in on one another to wreak havoc on the whole human family) is a specter that haunts the world; and only a disciplined bridling of greed by individuals, governments, cartels, and multi-national corporations, willing to heed Christ's word that it is more blessed to give than to get, can deliver us.

(4) Social disintegration (the essential collapse of family structures, educational units, and effective government resulting in anarchy leading straight to totalitarianism) is well advanced; and only the civilizing power of an immanent moral imperative can deliver us from the power of this evil lawlessness.

So what shall we do? Shall we be paralyzed by ambiguities? or preoccupied with irrelevancies? or diverted to wallow in shameless hedonism? No.

We face the ethical challenges of the Eighties with strength from God, with confidence that things are working together for good for those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose, and with a will to work the works of Him who has called us to be His people and do His thing in the world.

## Identifying the issues

Social psychologists and historians have a propensity for labeling our lives as the Age of This or the Decade of That and making the labels stick. The Thomas Wolfe "Me Decade" Syndrome, for instance, is now a part of our vocabulary.

The 80s already are being designated variously as "The Age of the New Right," "The Age of Anxiety," "The Age of Less," and numerous other handy tags, each of which may be correct.

But it is difficult to identify the overarching thrust of a decade, especially in modern times. James Dunn, Director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Christian Life Commission, said recently, "Calendars are out of whack in a Future Shock era, anyway."

So we are being a little presumptuous in trying to identify "Issues of the 80s" in this LIGHT. But, one of the best ways of seeing where we are going is to look where we have been. Dr. Albert McClellan, associate executive secretary and director of program planning for the Executive Committee, SBC, makes some prognostications based on thirty years of experience with the Convention. He gives an overview of Southern Baptists' track record in social awareness and applies those trends already set in motion to the next ten years.

The five areas of work for the Christian Life Commission are family life, race relations, economics, citizenship development, and special moral concerns. We obtained interviews from five individuals with expertise in these areas. They give their ideas on trends, challenges, and points at which churches and the denomination can minister.

One major impression that underscores these specialists' thinking is that the local church can be increasingly important in the decade of the 80s—both as a fellowship which provides a support system and as a motivator in applying the Gospel to individual lives and society.

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# SBC in the eighties?

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9. Willful and blatant disobedience of law for the sake of profit.

10. Growth of organized crime and the inability or unwillingness of the populace to deal with it.

11. Violence in the streets and in the homes.

12. Racism that both ignored the equal rights of minority ethnic groups and that organized ethnic consciousness into factional power blocks.

13. The increased pluralization of America and the loss of national unity.

14. Inferior citizenship; the poor response of American voters with only half of them bothering to vote.

Southern Baptist responses to these issues were mixed. Some we met well, some indifferently and some not at all. In too many cases we were more reactive than proactive.

*Most of the issues were met without systematic planning.* Among Southern Baptist leaders of the 1960s there were many who sensed the coming crises of the 1970s, but there were not enough to make a great difference in the organized response of the denomination. There was no deliberate analysis of the future and no detailed plan to meet it. Such may be impossible, considering Baptist polity.

*A few of the issues were met casually.* Much of the time Baptists were deep in a crisis before we realized its impact on our life and work. Take energy and inflation as examples. These have been problems since 1973, yet still relatively little has been done to show churches how they can reduce their bills or stretch their dollars or how they can operate in low mobility situations. As late as 1979 churches were still spending millions of dollars on energy wasteful construction, hoping somehow the energy crunch would disappear. Not many have yet considered the possible effect diminished personal mobility will have on church work.

*Very little money was allocated for the management of crises areas.* Baptists generally are strong on business as usual and weak on innovative programs for emerging needs. The denomination did manage to get new programs going for the aging, for ministers in distress and for families. Not much was done about alcoholism and *laissez-faire* morality.

On the other hand, there were some positive responses which mark a growing maturity for the denomination.

*A clearer ethical voice spoke more forcibly and was heard by more Baptists.* At the beginning of the decade the Christian Life Commission was highly suspect. By 1979 it had become a strong authoritative voice on all ethical issues. Its period of greatest influence has only barely begun.

*The ethical consciousness of Southern Baptists was heightened.* The Christian Life Commission brought a mature awareness to the ethical aspects of the gospel. Its emphases and activities were consistently in keeping with the issues affecting the national consciousness. The Sunday School Board, the mission agencies and the

seminaries also made significant contributions. By the end of the decade: (1) more Baptists understood the ethical implications of their personal lifestyles; (2) more Baptists admitted that faith without works indeed is dead; (3) more Baptists viewed denominational and national problems from the perspective of moral responsibility; and (4) more Baptists believed that the gospel is for the whole of man and all of his time.

*The ethnic pluralism of America was accepted by more Southern Baptists.* Many churches received blacks and other ethnics into their fellowship. In most states black churches were received into associational and convention fellowships. A black was elected vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

*Personal ministry was emphasized as a necessary dimension of the Christian life.* Late in the 1960s the Woman's Missionary Union introduced "mission action" as a means of dealing with distressing human problems. This combined personal ministry with personal witness and reflected at least a modest response to human need. State conventions have developed teams to help victims of earthquakes, storms, fires and floods.

*Strong defense of Christian moral values.* The 1970s brought three traumatic sociological shifts. One was the threatening of the family, another the fall of traditional sexual values, and another the emergence of pornography. Every church and almost every minister has responded to these challenges with firm conviction.

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***"Much of the time Baptists were deep in a crisis before we realized its impact on our life and work."***

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*Growing awareness of the implication of issues for the churches.* Some churches are beginning to ask questions about the meaning of the great issues for their own life and work. More leaders are seriously analyzing issues as they arise to assess the effect they have on church life.

*Organized approach to serious problems.* Within the decade at least five organized efforts have dealt with serious social issues. These include consultations on problems of the aging, church-minister relations, world hunger and Baptist women in the life of the churches. The Christian Life Commission also conducted annual conferences on major social issues.

*These responses do not prove that Southern Baptists have finally arrived at a rational response to all issues.* This is hardly possible considering the level of ethical awareness that exists in some church members. On occasion personal harsh, puritanical judgmentalism is still too much with us. We condemn by association and we sentence without evidence. We alienate the different

and destroy the unique. We withhold benefit of doubt and ascribe false motives. In short, too often too many of us leave the Spirit of Christ Jesus out of our lives and our judgments.

#### **Meeting the Issues of the 1980s**

Except as an example of what could be or perhaps what even may be, a listing of 1980 issues is futile. The following is a hypothesis, a kind of model to be used in asking how Baptists should respond.

1. Energy will be the controlling issue. At best some new bizarre fuel could be discovered; at worst the

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***“... a sense of moral responsibility  
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world could be thrown into a massive global war over available sources of energy. Just as men in the past fought over water and land, they could fight over oil and coal. One thing is certain; if the energy problem is not solved, lifestyles will radically change, perhaps even for the better.

2. Inflation will not be solved until the energy problem is solved. One prediction is that by 1985 gasoline will be \$5 a gallon at today's prices and twice that if inflation continues. At best, inflation will be about seven percent annually; at worst as much as 50 percent or more.

3. Housing will become critical as prices rise, as materials become even scarcer, and as the baby boom enters the housing market. At best America will discipline herself on use of resources and housing will be held in line. This may provoke major differences in the societal reconstruction now taking place. At worst, the housing industry could come to a standstill.

4. Citizenship will become more difficult. The national political parties, especially during presidential campaigns, will lose influence, special interest lobbying will increase, graft will become more prevalent, ethnic parties will coalesce, the tax structure will be endangered and municipalities will be threatened with bankruptcy. We will pay dearly for past extravagances. For example, the interstate highway system was built on the assumption that America would always be affluent. In a low energy, low tax society it cannot be maintained. At best a new sense of moral responsibility could revive America's political stewardship. At worst, we could drift into a fascist mentality.

5. Vast discontinuities will develop between the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated, the

protected labor unions member and the non-protected white collar worker, the people fortunate enough to own their homes and those who are not, the employed and the unemployed and many other diverse antitheticals. At best there will come a rising sense of interpersonal responsibility. At worst, totalitarianism could destroy the world we know.

6. Education at all levels will become a major issue. Exorbitant transportation and maintenance costs, labor union demands, a shaky tax structure, sectarian exclusiveness, deteriorated instruction are some of the trouble points that could surface. Public education as such could be threatened. Higher education will become so expensive as to be considered a luxury. At best, national planning will make education a high priority item. At worst the free public school could be destroyed by an avalanche of expensive private schools. Education could be set back 200 years.

7. Freedom will become a vital issue in the 1980s. Great stress will be placed on freedom from prejudice, freedom from tradition, and freedom from too much government. America will closely examine many of the new tyrannies: the tyranny of franchise, the tyranny of manipulative television, the tyranny of the indiscriminating press. At best, liberty in America will acquire a new philosophical spiritual base that includes respect for the individual and love of neighbor. At worst, liberty will become more licensed, and it will diminish as America becomes more fascist.

8. Government itself could become the dominant social issue of the 1980s. The tension points could be too much government, bankrupt government, runaway government, corrupt government, or ineffective government. At best the debate could strengthen traditional government for the battles it must fight in the 1980s. At worst, we could be driven into a dictator led society.

9. Personal fulfillment in a low energy, highly technical society could bring traumatic adjustments. At best America could vastly reorganize her transportation and communication facilities to take care of every human need. At worst, we could be even more muddled at the end of the decade.

10. Increasing alcoholism and drug addiction could lower the national IQ and make us vulnerable to aggressor nations. At best this prospect could bring new personal disciplines and social controls to correct our present highly licensed situation. At worst, America could become even more licensed with utter physical breakdown and complete moral collapse.

This outline of issues is meant to be illustrative only. To present all possible problems and contingencies would take hundreds of pages.

#### **“How should Southern Baptists respond?”**

*Southern Baptists should set norms to emphasize both the spiritual and the ethical, and that will include both biblical and social requirements.* These norms, while cast in traditional, doctrinal and ethical language, should stress the ethical as a major part of the Christian life. The norms are already changing, a fact evident to



any observer. The denomination is in ferment and at times even foment. If the heat of debate does not destroy our equilibrium, if we do clutter ourselves with non-scriptural creeds, if we retain our sense of mission and if we let the freedom of God's Spirit increase our momentum, then in the decade to come or at least by the end of it, Southern Baptists can make major contributions to the human and spiritual welfare of all peoples at home and abroad. These will not necessarily be material contributions but theological and philosophical ones. Baptist ethical awareness could bring a whole new millenium of spiritual enlightenment with the 21st century becoming the era of the truly biblical man.

*Southern Baptists should come to a new acceptance of diversity.* This will be a traumatic experience for a group who so many hundreds of years has been almost wholly Anglo Saxon and wholly Southern. It will be the climaxing of a trend that started in the 1930s when thousands of Southern Baptists migrated to the West Coast and accelerated in 1942 when the California state Baptist convention was recognized as a cooperating general Baptist body. In the next decade this 50-year trend should come to full fruition. The ethnic complexion of the convention will change with black churches, Hispanic churches, Korean churches, Chinese churches, Vietnamese churches, Indian churches—all in equality. The racial barriers of most congregations will dissolve. In this shift Baptists will rediscover that they are not all alike in tradition and doctrine. Beyond the present doctrinal debates there will come new acceptance of Baptist diversity. Acceptance holds significance for many social and ethical issues affecting Southern Baptists. The alternative is Southern Baptist dissolution.

*Southern Baptist appreciation for human qualities and human abilities should greatly increase.* If this happens, the acceptance of diversity will bring new acceptance of persons. With increased doctrinal integrity and basic spiritual conviction, the plight of persons will become the new focus of concern. In a sense, Baptists will be returning to New Testament evangelism that puts an emphasis on the lostness of human beings. There will be a new search for the socially disenfranchised, the morally illiterate, the spiritually destitute, the physically deprived, and the physically broken. This search will derive from a new understanding of what Jesus meant when he said that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost. In more profound ways than we have ever known, the cross of Christ will stand at the heart of ethical motivation. Spirituality will be measured by how much of the Spirit of Christ moves people to good works, not by how much people boast of their own holiness.

*Southern Baptists should develop a heightened concern for non-material human needs.* This is not to say they should not be concerned about food and clothing or medicine and health or shelter and warmth. Concern for these also will increase, but along with them and as perhaps as a new dimension of Christian mission will be concern for such things as a loving

home environment for the child, adequate marriage laws to protect mothers and children, full liberty for all people everywhere, the right to belong to a group and the right to help shape the agenda of the group, freedom from drug dependency, equal educational opportunities for the masses, relief from the fear of violence and abuse, full and satisfying employment and

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***“In more profound ways, . . . the cross of Christ will stand at the heart of ethical motivation.”***

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many many more material needs. More who search the scriptures will find new ways to meet these needs in their own lives and the lives of others.

*Both Southern Baptist individuals and institutions should develop increased responsibility and “response-ability.”* If they do, not only will they feel their personal and institutional obligation for human need, they will develop new mechanisms for response. One of the thrilling things about the decade ahead will be to observe and even to participate in a new realization of what it means to be totally Christian. Every Christian will truly learn to bear the burdens of others. Institutions will develop new procedures for involvement. Conventions will speak forthrightly on moral and political questions. There also will surely come increased spending to help inform Baptist people on matters of grave social and ethical concern.

*Southern Baptists should discover and accept limits.* They will find what they can and cannot do in service to the world. They will know when a denominational program is too complex and an institutional load too heavy. They will know when a church plant is too big, a congregation too unwieldy, a church program too complex; and more importantly they will know how to disperse their strength into more congregations and more expressions of ministry. They will surely see that a physical church program does not always foster a spiritual church *koinonia*. The results will be a cloning of themselves in other locations and other communities. A very traditional method of organizing missions will serve untraditional aims by scattering congregations into a 21st century dispersion. The acceptance of limits will also apply to spiritual and ethical values. For example, they will learn that freedom has limits that begin with responsibility, that faith has limits that begin where Christ wishes good works to be done, and that the church as an institution has limits that begin where the individual members are ministers. They will also recognize that God has other people at work in the world besides themselves. Acceptance of reasonable limits will give Baptists new stability and new power. It will not diminish growth but increase it.

# Perspectives on the eighties

**Ed. note**—*LIGHT* interviewed specialists in the five major areas of the Christian Life Commission's work. *Hollis E. Johnson, III, who follows first, is the executive secretary-treasurer for the Southern Baptist Foundation, Nashville, Tennessee.*

**LIGHT:** Could you identify some of the emerging trends in the area of economics for the 1980s?

**Johnson:** First, I think the 80s will be marked by a period of great technological advance. There will be expansion in the continued use of home computers and calculators which will enable us to pay our bills, send messages to other persons or relatives, and even to do our banking. The second area is that the real growth in gross national product in the 80s will decline slightly. In the decade of the 70s the real growth was approximately 3% and it appears that this will slow to approximately 2% in real growth terms during the 80s. This is due primarily to a slowing in the population growth, particularly in the 15-44 age group. This age group in terms of percentage of income are the big spenders in society. Third, the 80s will be marked by continuing starkly high, long-term interest rates. They will go down somewhat during the early part of the decade, but still will be high historically. Fourth, we will continue to have high energy costs until alternate fuels are found or domestic sources are discovered. This means more of a trend to smaller cars and mass transportation. The fifth is the trend that has emerged fairly recently. It is a lessening of the involvement of government in the economy. This involvement that will take place will be more positive, but it will be more in the area of leading rather than following. An example of this is the Federal Reserve Board's recent policy change on the 6th of October to regulate the growth of the money supply by keeping a track on the bank reserves rather than on interest rates.

**LIGHT:** What are some of the implications of these trends for the next decade?

**Johnson:** With the slightly slower real growth, the historically high rates, and the continuing high energy costs there will be less discretionary income for the consumer after he has paid for food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. Therefore, there will be a bigger strain on what is left to go to the church whose expenses are also going to be escalating during this period. This will put a much greater stress on church finances.

**LIGHT:** What are some suggestions for dealing with these trends?

**Johnson:** First, I think we can begin to do more of the regular maintenance around the church and the repairs ourselves. Secondly, we need to make a hard assessment of our worship services so as to reduce the time the church is heated or cooled and make what may be just one worship service a week a real worshipful experience

with good fellowship of the members or the body.

Third, we can cultivate a make-do philosophy, which simply means that we can get by with the facilities and property we have for whatever period of time it is necessary until the economic conditions are eased. Fourth, somehow, we must lead those who don't financially support the church, or support it in a very small degree, to the biblical exhortation that what we have is God's; it comes from him; and we are only stewards of what he has entrusted to us. The fifth area where we can do something is, individually, we can reduce our expectations of lifestyle. By that I mean we can lower the standard of living to which we have been accustomed.

**Ed. note**—*Daniel B. McGee is professor of Christian ethics, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.*

**LIGHT:** What are some of the areas that you see emerging as special moral concerns for us in the 1980s?

**McGee:** I would identify some of those areas as the arms race issue and the militarism that goes with it; the question of world hunger; a lot of economic and political complexities in the area of health care. Another area is that of the environmental crisis which interacts with these other issues, I think. Finally, the area of communications—technology in this area is going to continue to change radically and introduce some new problems.

**LIGHT:** Could you speak to the arms race more specifically?

**McGee:** As I see it, there will be a growing awareness on our part that if the massive destructiveness of our military power doesn't destroy us, the economic devastation of the arms race will. We have lived with the fears of the 50s that our modern weapons could destroy us or a portion of us—the human race. I think it will become even clearer to us in the 80s that might not be the way those bombs get us. Our investment in worldwide military destructive power is the major contributor to worldwide inflation. It may be the most important factor in a serious disruption in the world economy.

**LIGHT:** How then will militarism and the arms race present a challenge to the church?

**McGee:** The church has the task to avoid, on the one hand, the inclination to believe that military power can solve our problems. And, on the other hand, the church has to avoid lapsing into a naive pacifism that denies the reality of human sin and the necessity for the use of power in maintaining order in the world.

**LIGHT:** Let's move to your perception of the emerging trends related to world hunger.

**McGee:** OK. I think there may be one new wrinkle in



the world hunger scene. There will continue to be an intensification of the problem, and we should anticipate that problem, at any moment, could significantly increase by a war or some massive reversal of economic instability. But beyond that, we in the United States face the reality of bone-sucking hunger coming closer to us not only because of the shrinking world, but I think we are going to feel the pressure of immigration. We will not be able to keep the reality of world hunger from our borders. It will be lapping up on our shores throughout the 80s and we will have to deal with it, not at arm's length as we've been able to do, but as something that has shown up on our doorstep.

**LIGHT:** Will more people respond to the issue of world hunger?

**McGee:** I don't know whether more people are going to respond to hunger, but I think more people are going to be forced to face it and to admit who we are. If I were looking at what I think the church must face up to, it would be that I think we'd have to admit that any effective measures that we might instigate or participate in will require sacrifice, both individually and corporately. I think we have lived under the assumption that we could minister to the world's hunger and the hungry out of our excess. I think that is no longer going to be adequate.

**LIGHT:** Health care delivery systems, biomedical issues—those are the kinds of things not many people



Johnson



McGee

in our churches are actually familiar with. How will these issues encroach more upon us as we go into the next decade?

**McGee:** I think that we can anticipate two kinds of development. One is an increase in the development of the exotic and mind-boggling techniques of the last decade. And therefore what we will encounter will be newer and more perplexing possibilities requiring ethical decisions. And, secondly, we must get to the point of realizing we cannot afford to do economically all that we can do technologically. In the last three decades, the percentage of the American gross national product invested in health care has more than doubled. That type of percentage of our total wealth invested in health care is not going to continue to be possible.

**LIGHT:** Do you have any suggestions for how churches can deal with these developments?

**McGee:** I think there are two points that pastors and churches need to consider. One is to deal with the problem of coming up with clear and helpful ethical guidelines in areas where we have no clear traditional guidelines available. It's going to require a knowledge of the biblical traditions, a further look at the basic values

of love and justice, and respect for human life. Secondly, I would hope that the church would help our society identify priorities within the field of health care; that we give a lot more attention than we have recently to how health care resources are distributed; that we not allow those funds to fall automatically only into technology. A very important point to remember is the church as the church is the champion of those whom the world seems to forget.

**LIGHT:** What is coming with regard to environmental concerns?

**McGee:** I see as a major trend the development of environmental deterioration to a point that threatens the existence of life. And not just peripheries of our existence. We saw this in the 70s for the first time with the energy crisis where we ran out of something—a resource—that touched us where we live everyday. I think during the 80s environmental deterioration will touch us at the points of other similar crises: water crisis, food crisis, waste disposal crisis.

**LIGHT:** How can the church deal with this?

**McGee:** I see the Christian community having a very clear responsibility to recover the full meaning of the doctrine of stewardship and to communicate that meaning clearly. And we must be sure that as we recover that doctrine we uncover that element of stewardship which calls for a life-style, if not austere, at least conservative—one of moderation.

**LIGHT:** What will be happening in the mass media in the 80s?

**McGee:** Technology is advancing rapidly, particularly with regard to TV. More and more industries are going to have access to that medium so that along with a few major networks smaller networks will be broadcasting. An awful lot of different stuff is going to be coming out. We are going to have to get ready for a major invasion of the world into our lives. Now, the charge to the church is for us not to become seduced by the kinds of worldly values that are going to dominate that content, and we must learn to use the medium responsibly and not use secular methods to draw audiences.

**LIGHT:** So, in essence, are you saying that we are looking at a Christ and culture confrontation with mass media in the 1980s?

**McGee:** Yes, especially the more we espouse Christian values. The further I go along, I personally feel a greater sense of conflict between my faith and the culture. And I feel that the church is going to be more challenged to stand up and be counted or join the cultural bandwagon.

**Ed. note—Robert Maddox is a White House special assistant for liaison with the religious community.**

**LIGHT:** Is there any overarching trend emerging in citizenship for the 1980s?

**Maddox:** Economics has much to do with setting the stage for trends in politics and citizen involvement. The trend that I see flowing out of the economic sphere is how the political realm and the realm of citizenship confronts an economic crunch. The economy probably is not going to get bigger for a while, so with an increasing population everybody's slice of the "economic

pie" is going to be a bit smaller. This makes for a conservative trend in religion, in politics, in economics, and in all kinds of categories. So, I think that the trend, the general rubric under which we are going to be operating for a while, is a conservative one.

**LIGHT:** What would this say with regard to the type of candidates running for office and political ideology?

**Maddox:** Well, the candidates, if they read the signs at all, are going to reflect the conservatives. Closely tied with the conservative tends to be an authoritarian mind-set. That's not to make a value judgment about its rightness or wrongness. Somebody must tell us how to make it through a time of scarcity. When there is plenty to go around, people can talk back and forth and turn to a consensus politics. But when the economy is involved, people naturally tend to look to somebody to tell them what to do. Most likely a more authoritarian, charismatic kind of leader is going to try to emerge. I don't recommend that kind of leader, but that may well be the kind of leaders who will emerge.

**LIGHT:** What does that have to say for citizenship involvement?

**Maddox:** It is going to require that people think much more carefully, to think about the kind of people they elect, the kind of policies that the candidates propose. Generally, I would say if a candidate sounds strong and proposes quick fixes, I would think he is highly suspect.

**LIGHT:** How will these general trends challenge the churches?

**Maddox:** Churches center and right, not just left of center as in the past, are getting involved politically. This means more churches are going to demand attention from the government, not more giveaways but more attention. Members and leaders in the congrega-



**Maddox**



**Howell**

tions are going to have to pay more attention to politics, they are going to have to learn issues more carefully, they are going to have to listen to more than one side; otherwise we will come out being a terribly divisive crowd. If we are going to be involved in moral issues such as government infringing on church activities then we simply must know what we are talking about.

**LIGHT:** Are you talking about education about Christian citizenship involvement?

**Maddox:** Yes, but the concept of education is not even strong enough. Education has lost its edge. It has really got to be a study—involvement—dialogue if we are going to know what we are talking about.

**Ed. note—***John C. Howell is professor of Christian ethics and Dean at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.*

**LIGHT:** What do you feel are some of the emerging trends in the area of family life in the 1980s?

**Howell:** I think one of the things is going to be the changing situations dealing with the consequences of divorce and the churches' involvement in that issue. The responsibility for the ministry of helping people work through preparation for marriage and helping them to maintain good marriages. I don't see much cooling off of the whole concern over abortion as a part of the concern for the family. It appears to me, too, that one of the issues for our church people will be the concern over role relationships. That is already a pretty significant issue for us.

I do feel that the whole area of human sexuality education in the home, in the churches, and in society as a whole is going to be confronted more. Problems arise because it is not simply a poor understanding of biological facts, but the poor understanding of what it is to be male and female in our society. The area of financial accountability in light of the economic conditions in society is going to be one of the issues. An area families have not been trained for is how to deal with budgeting and handling of money. This is especially a problem with divorced people. The providing of family life services for the poor and underprivileged to have better homes and more stable kinds of lives has largely been ignored by much of our church material. Violence in the family has been growing. Child abuse, mate abuse, grandparent abuse—these things need to be vitally related to the churches' concern to minister to families. The whole homosexuality issue—of trying to deal with why young people adopt the homosexual life-style, for instance—will continue as a concern. But I also think in the midst of this there will be a renewed emphasis on the family unit—the husband's, wife's and children's relationship with each other.

**LIGHT:** Would you care to say if any of these would present more challenge than others?

**Howell:** Well, I think possibly the kind of things that would capture our attention as church people would be the whole marriage preparation/marriage enrichment emphasis—the need to help families develop a better family life. It presents churches with a significantly higher challenge. I think some of the others are more reflective of the problem areas that we will be facing causing stress. Churches need to get realistic about where families are in a way that they can plug in on what happens to families.

**LIGHT:** Would you propose ways in which churches might better address these problem areas as opposed to how they have been in the decade of the 70s?

**Howell:** I think probably the realistic assessment of what families are facing in the stressful times in which we live would be one of the steps that most churches are willing to do. More churches are becoming concerned. The denomination is more concerned. The fact that we're pointing toward a 1982-85 calendar to a time when a major focus will be on the family is significant. We are becoming more aware of whether we will respond to help people to accept their humanity, especially in conflict areas, and how to deal with conflict in the home.

Let me make one other point and that is the

(Continued on page 11)



## HUNGER:

### *A global response needed*

By Walker Knight

In the more than 30 years as a journalist that I have observed Southern Baptists, I remember nothing that has so captured the emotion of our people as have world hunger needs. Without strong denominational emphasis, although that is now coming, millions of dollars have been pressed upon denominational agencies for hunger relief.

Southern Baptists have awakened in an exciting way to what mostly has been perceived as foreign hunger need, but our awakening must not have blind spots. It must be global, and that demands we include our own nation.

Government sources report that 20 million persons in the United States suffer from hunger or serious malnutrition. Especially suffering are the aged, migrants, Indians, children, expectant mothers, and the unemployed. Within the past 10 years, government programs and private efforts have eliminated some of the gross malnutrition which gave birth to the present assistance through programs like food stamps, free lunches, and meals-on-wheels. We have made progress but new threats may place us at near zero again. Predictions are that the expected recession of 1980 will increase unemployment by more than 2 million. When this is coupled with the twin spectre of inflation, all of these groups presently suffering may be pushed into the danger zone of severe malnutrition.

Presently, the extent and nature of domestic hunger is not visible, because it does not manifest itself in the extreme forms seen in undeveloped nations. We are at the disadvantage of operating with inadequate information, not knowing exactly who is affected. For this reason, directors of the Home Mission Board have asked Southern Baptists to follow their lead in urging

Congress to fund and implement a national survey on hunger for determining the extent, number and location of hungry people in the United States.

Southern Baptists can take other steps to deal with domestic hunger. We need to explore our role in assisting needy persons to make sure they receive the available services. We need to monitor abuses in the programs, to supplement those which are inadequate, and to stand alongside the poor as their advocates where decisions are being made that affect their lives.

The role of advocacy will be especially important in the event of a cut in services to persons in need, a very present danger with the nation's growing over-concern for increases in military spending.

An emphasis on domestic hunger should not in any way dampen the enthusiasm for foreign concerns or take the place of that emphasis. On the other hand, we cannot neglect hunger at home simply because its character is different and it is difficult to address. To deal properly with domestic hunger is to look poverty full in its face and often to discover that we are personally implicated. To deal with domestic hunger is thus more confronting and difficult.

Domestic hunger, contrary to foreign hunger, is difficult to perceive and to act upon because it is so close, so intertwined with our values and misconceptions, and more demanding of understanding. A special act of will is required. To realize all this, however, is the first step to more positive action. Let's also take a second immediate step: write Congress supporting the national survey.



**Walker Knight** is director of the editorial services department of the Home Mission Board, SBC and editor of *Home Missions*.

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# ON THE ETHICS FRONT

*In this issue, LIGHT features teachers of Christian ethics and Church and Community from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.*

"We have discovered over the years that one of the successes of teaching Christian ethics is that most every other discipline discovers sooner or later that it must also touch upon the issues which we all confront." With that comprehensive view, Paul Simmons has taught Christian ethics at Southern Seminary since 1970.

As associate professor of Christian ethics, Simmons considers himself as having "the responsibility of introducing students to the major traditions which are a part of Christian ethical thought, the crucial factors which are involved in Christian ethical methodology, to expose them to my own perspectives and to help them formulate their own approach to Christian moral decision-making. Needless to say, I am also a learner. I continue to be a student of Christian ethics as well as one who attempts to teach in the area of this discipline."

Simmons will be teaching a section of the survey ethics course, "The Church and the Family," and a Ph.D. seminar, "Contemporary Theological Ethics" this spring. In addition he maintains through speaking and writing interests in biomedical ethics, church renewal, and the Christian and violence.

Before assuming a teaching post at Southern, Simmons was a pastor. He maintains heavy involvement with the local church as an interim pastor and holding membership at Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville.

Simmons earned the A.A. degree at Southwest Baptist College, the B.A. at Union University, the B.D. and Th.M., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Ph.D., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Simmons and his wife, Betty, have three children: Brent, Brian, and Catherine.

Glen Stassen describes his role as a seminary teacher as one which helps students to be able "to see *all* of life under the Lordship of Christ, not merely some

compartments." Out of this perspective, he feels "Christian ethics offers the opportunity to integrate input from biblical studies, theological and philosophical studies, and historical and social studies."

Stassen's own background reflects this integration process at work. His B.A. from the University of Virginia was in physics. After that, he moved into the field of religion, getting a B.D. from Union Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Duke University. As a Visiting Scholar to Harvard University, he did research in foreign policy decision-making. After serving in two churches, he taught at Kentucky Southern College (now part of University of Louisville) and Berea College. At both those schools he coordinated interdisciplinary courses.

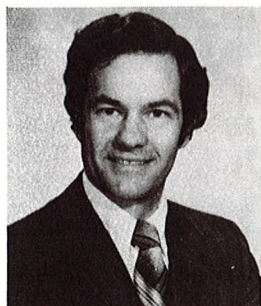
The nuclear arms race, peacemaking, world hunger, energy consumption, the struggle for human rights, and personal wholeness are issues which concern Stassen. He examines these in his spring semester courses, "World Hunger and the Energy Crisis" and the survey ethics course.

The fellowship of Crescent Hills Baptist Church, Louisville, is important to Glen, Dot, Michael, William, and David Stassen. Glen says, "In our church, prayers and worship do express my deep concerns, including private concerns, family concerns, concerns for friends, and peace and hunger concerns. The church is extremely important for my worship and prayer life. I'm a deacon, a member of two committees, and co-teacher of my Sunday School class; but the worship life is the most important for me."

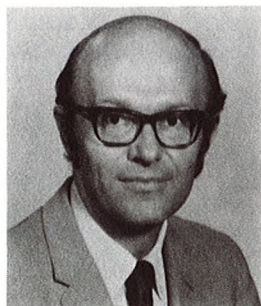
After eighteen years of experience as a pastor in North Carolina and Kentucky, G. Willis Bennett was invited in 1959 to come to Southern Seminary to teach. He was asked to develop some courses in the Church and Community field, at that time attached to the Department of Christian ethics.

Since 1969, he has served as the William Walker Brookes Professor of Church and Community and Director of Field Education. In 1975, in addition to his other duties, Bennett began as Director of Advanced Professional Studies for the Seminary.

As a seminary teacher, Willis Bennett describes his



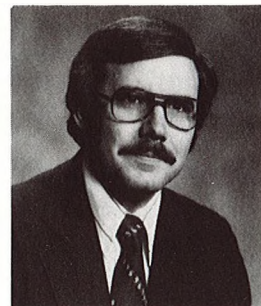
Simmons



Stassen



Bennett



McSwain



role as "an equipper of persons who intend to function in ministry. I want not so much to present knowledge that will simply be used for its own sake, as to enable students to learn how to engage in theological, psychological, and sociological research throughout their ministry and make use of it to function in a more effective and professional manner. I want to work in terms of motivating them to a higher performance in Christian ministry."

This spring Bennett is teaching "The Practice of Ministry," "Church Action in the Community," and "The Role of the Minister in Social Change." He thinks the contemporary nature of the church and community field is its biggest challenge. "It forces us to deal with what is changing year by year and trying to help students see how to relate the gospel and ministry to changing situations."

Willis Bennett is an active churchman. When not teaching, filling the pulpit, or on visitation for St. Matthews Baptist Church, he is involved in an interim pastorate (twenty in twenty years).

After earning an A.B. at Wake Forest University, Bennett received the B.D., Th.M., and Ph.D. from Southern Seminary. He also graduated from the University of Louisville with the M.S.S.W. He has done advanced study at Union Theological Seminary.

Bennett and his wife have three children: Susanne, Jane, and Mary.

"Overcoming the tradition that one cannot be evangelistic and socially conscious at the same time" is

one of the challenges of teaching in the Church and Community department says Larry McSwain. "Students must be convinced that concern for community is a 'spiritual' task of the church."

Originally preparing for a pastorate, McSwain spent two years working as a researcher in urban studies at the Urban Studies Center at the University of Louisville in the late sixties. One of his research projects drew attention that prompted an invitation to teach at Southern. Since 1970, Larry McSwain has attempted "to prepare, in a very short time and with multiple pressures, students to be equipped for a lifetime of ministry." McSwain, now an associate professor, believes "the teacher is a pastor-motivator in relation to students. Teaching must be more than mastery of an area of content. It is relational, for ministry is relational. So, I am trying to teach in the context of some understanding of who students are and what their goals are. I try to adjust to those realities to be available as a pastor to students as they learn."

A native Oklahoman, McSwain received his B.A. from Oklahoma State University, the B.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the S.T.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as a Visiting Scholar at Graduate Theological Union and University of California, Berkeley. This semester he is teaching "Sociology of Religion in the American Context," "Religion and Social Change," and "The Community Context for Church Ministry."

McSwain, his wife, Sue, and children Mike and Laura are active members of Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville.

## Interviews

(Continued from page 8)

strengthening and understanding of senior adult family life. Senior adults are having much more creative, fulfilling experiences in their retirement years. The churches are beginning to see the opportunities of strengthening their ministries here. Some churches are very responsive now to senior adults—for instance to help them make better judgments about retirement. I think that is another area to focus on.

**LIGHT:** Which brings to mind another phenomenon we have seen in the 70s of single adults. How do you perceive the changes in that?

**Howell:** Well, I think what's happened in the growing group of singles is the churches are realizing that a single adult is a real person, not a half person. There is a person with a creative opportunity of growth. The single, however, whether by choice, divorced, or widowed, presents the church with a different kind of ministry. One of the challenges of the fact that people are delaying marriage longer is the whole matter of the ethical understanding of how they express their sexuality from puberty to twenty-five or six, and—this area—churches have not really considered singles. The large singles population is facing us with a new challenge of the ethical study of the definition of our sexuality.

**Ed. note—**LARRY ROSE is director of associational missions, Waco Baptist Association, Waco, Texas.

**LIGHT:** What are some of the trends that you project in the 1980s with regard to race relations?

**Rose:** I think that the major factor is going to be that when race is mentioned we will not automatically think of the blacks as the only ethnic group. The 80s are



going to see a tremendous shift in that because, by all projections, the Hispanics will be the largest ethnic group in the United States. We've got to adjust to the fact that we are no longer talking about one single ethnic group being dominant but we are going to see the Hispanic group, the blacks, and an enormous influx of

the Asian population into our country.

**LIGHT:** Are there any population patterns beginning to develop with particular reference to Hispanics?

**Rose:** I think that what has already developed is the large numbers in the agriculture industry and the menial kind of tasks—those that certain factories and industry deal with. The Southwest seems to be the major area of population growth of Hispanics. California and Texas, in particular, are going to be the areas that see the most influx of population.

**LIGHT:** Does that present any need for new approaches from the political standpoint in dealing with further Hispanic influx?

**Rose:** We have enormous political inconsistencies—for example, the bill that was just passed by the legislature dealing with illegal immigration. It is, you know, against the law for a person to be in this country illegally and not have documents of proper entry. On the other hand, it is not against the law for an employer to employ an illegal person or an undocumented worker. But, if that undocumented worker was found out, they could be arrested and, of course, deported out of the country. These kinds of inconsistencies are going to be some big issues in the 80s.

**LIGHT:** Do you see the 80s as a decade of activism with regard to race relations?

**Rose:** That's a tough question. I do not see developing the kind of hatred that I saw in the 50s in the South over the issue of the blacks. It's a different ball game, I think. There are some problems developing between the blacks and the browns over political issues. The blacks have fought so hard to reach some places that they are at now, but they see that they are being challenged now by the Hispanics more than they are by the whites. I don't know what all the ramifications of that will be, but it's going to put some tremendous pressure on not only black-white relations but also the black and

brown relationships.

**LIGHT:** Among these trends, which do you think would be the most significant for the churches in the 80s?

**Rose:** Well, I'm thrilled at what our denomination is doing in making inroads into ethnic and language groups. The thing that is disappointing, though, is when you draw the bottom line, Southern Baptists are still 95 percent Anglo. That does not, of course, reflect our population. That says to us, I think, that we are going to have to make a more concentrated effort than ever before in reaching the language groups. I think the challenge for the churches is going to be that we cannot develop a church in the black community, in the Hispanic community, and Asian community like we have developed churches in our Anglo communities in the past. And I think that is difficult for us to get a handle on, but I think it is the most significant challenge that we have.

**LIGHT:** For years we have understood missions in terms of going to foreign shores. Would you view the 80s as more of what appears to be an emerging trend that the foreign shores are coming to us?

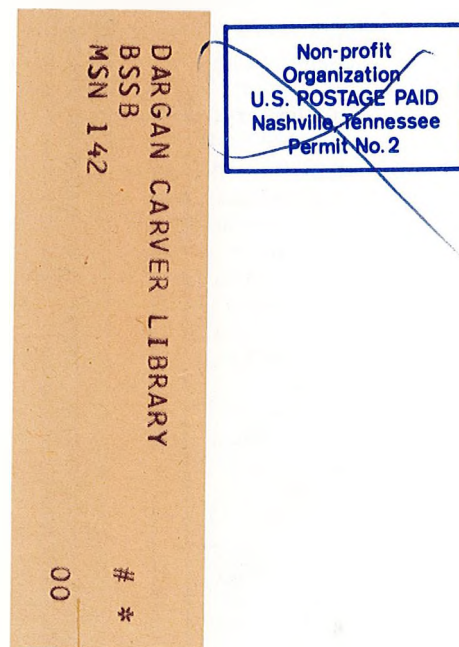
**Rose:** A great number of these people are coming to live here and make their life here. Also, an enormous number of people are coming on a short-term basis. Let me give you some examples. There are, of course, the students who come here. They are the best of other nations who come here for training. There are, for instance, the Hispanic workers. The Mexican government says that most of their people who come into this country are not coming here to make their lives but are coming here to get financing, to get a start in life, to put some things together so that they can go back and live in their own country. It is one of the greatest opportunities we have in sharing the gospel here with them that they might carry it back. I think that is the message for us.



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