

LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
October 1983



“Feed me with the food that is my portion.”

(Proverbs 30:8)

Observe World Hunger Day
October 9, 1983

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Inside LIGHT

Editor's Note: The Christian Life Commission sponsored a conference on "Christians Responding to World Hunger" this past summer during the annual Christian Life Commission Week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico. The following addresses have been edited to produce this special issue of LIGHT and to provide an ongoing resource for Southern Baptists concerned about world hunger.

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How We Can Help the Hungry

Southern Baptists are beginning to see just how massive, how pervasive, how tragic human hunger really is.

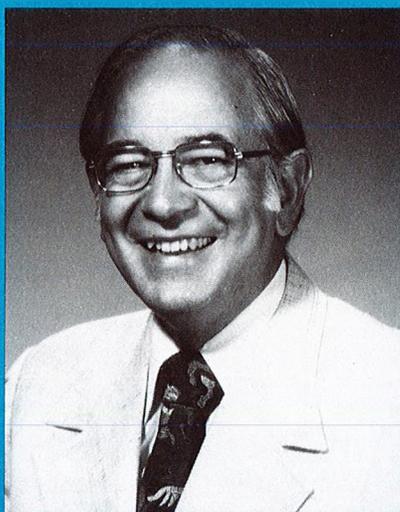
It's easy to get frustrated. What can Christians do? What difference can one single person possibly make? Our actions both individually and together, however, can and do make a profound difference. They are the difference between life and death for many, many human beings created in God's image, after his likeness.

How can we help the hungry? Here are some specific things we can do.

The first and most important thing we can do is pray. Prayer does change things. Prayer helps us to see the hungry poor with the compassion of Jesus Christ; and prayer helps us to order our lives as our Lord who "went about doing good" ordered his.

A second thing we can do is to give. If every Southern Baptist gave just \$1 a year through our local churches to help the hungry, we could more than double our annual world hunger relief gifts through our Foreign Mission Board and our Home Mission Board. We are now doing some good but we can do much, much better.

A third thing we can do is to



maintain disciplined lifestyles representing truly responsible Christian stewardship. Such discipline enables us both to give more for the hungry and to maintain a believable, genuinely authentic Christian witness.

Fourth, we can reach out to the poor and hungry in our own neighborhoods. Through our local churches, our Baptist associational outreach ministries, and the extended Christian social ministries of our own Home Mission Board, we can help the hungry.

Fifth, we can exercise responsible citizenship on behalf of the hungry. For every dollar American Christians give for hunger relief abroad, our government, the

strongest and most compassionate government in the world, provides about \$5 to \$10 for hunger relief abroad; and that figure could be readily doubled by our elected representatives merely through a more careful distribution of already allocated public funds. Responsible Christian citizenship should communicate this urgent need to our elected representatives.

Sixth, and finally, we can get more information and ideas for observing World Hunger Day on the Southern Baptist Convention's denominational calendar and for helping the hungry from the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and from parallel applied Christianity organizations in the state Baptist conventions.

Having learned, we are obligated to DO for, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Jesus' words are inescapable, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me" and "Inasmuch as you have not done it unto one of the least of these you have not done it unto me."

Foy Valentine

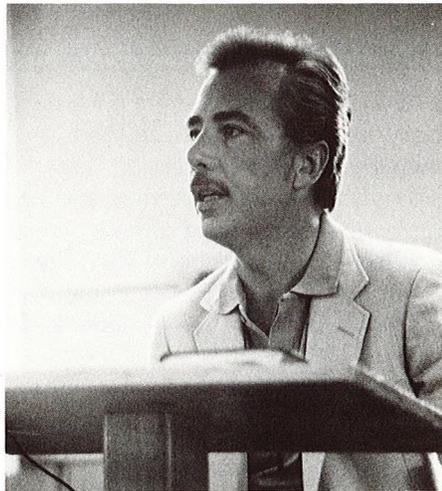
Enough Is Enough

by C. David Matthews

We were driving through Atlanta one Sunday night and were finding all kinds of interesting things on the radio. We came upon Reverend Ike. He was doing his thing. We heard a testimony about somebody who had prayed for a Cadillac and had gotten it, and on and on it went. Neither of my children had ever heard Reverend Ike or heard of him. One of them was incredulous at all this, and the other was taking it pretty coolly. When we were about ready to turn that off and go to something else, the incredulous one turned to the other and said, "Can you believe that?" Then it finally dawned on the other one who said, "I thought it was a comedy routine." Then she was incredulous. It was that far from reality for her.

I think there is hope for us in the gospel, but there is not hope in all expressions of the gospel. Most of the expressions of the gospel can probably be found in most of our churches. Some of them live a little bit in all of us.

T.C. Smith says we owe the richness of the New Testament largely to the fact that so many of the first Christians, like the ones at Corinth, were such a sorry lot. We can even be grateful that these were such terrible people. If they had not been cantankerous and evil, if they had been loving, good, sweet, kind and Christlike, then we wouldn't have much of a New Testament. The New Testament was written largely in response to what was going on in the churches. Paul would most assuredly have written something entirely different if the people had been different. Paul was a kind of spiritual director and he was working with people in those first century churches who needed a lot of spiritual direction. He was writing in response to, and often in a kind of flagrant reaction to, what was happening in the churches.



Matthews

A Bad Doctrine

In Corinth there were factions in the church that were essentially caused by personality cults. Folks gathered around their own heroes. What becomes obvious when you come to the fourth chapter of 1 Corinthians, verses 1-13, is that these church members were not only boasting about their particular hero or spiritual leader, be it Apollos or whoever; they were also boasting of their own superiority. They were puffed up. They were bragging about possessing a special kind of wisdom. They were boasting of a superiority that was blatant arrogance.

Now these self-righteous Christians in the factions in the church at Corinth not only supposed themselves to have been instructed in the secret and hidden wisdom of God: "We know more than other people know. We know things you don't know." They even claimed that they were now reigning with Christ; hence, they were able to stand in judgment on all others, including the apostles themselves. And so this is the reason why Paul is defending himself a bit in this passage. Paul scorns their supposed superiority. "Look at you," he says. "You think you are really something, and even if

you were, what you are or what you have is from God and so there is no reason for boasting."

The happy gospel of success and prosperity and peace of mind which finds its extreme form in somebody like Reverend Ike, but which frankly can be heard in many, many pulpits on any given Sunday, the happy gospel that promises success and prosperity and peace of mind is very, very difficult to square with the New Testament. And yet, it is almost a doctrine among us that prosperity, peace of mind, and success are all evidences of God's favor.

That's difficult to base on passages such as 1 Corinthians 4. Paul's point is that Christians have no reason for pride or for some premature assumption of glory, as if we have already arrived. The true Christian, rather, is one who continues to participate in the sufferings and in the humility of Christ Jesus himself. That means, to some degree at least, that the true Christian is one who participates in the suffering and incompleteness of the world. Paul, who was very outspoken about his own apostolic status, says, "to the present hour," even up until now, with no sign of much change until the Lord comes, "to the present hour we hunger and thirst."

Preoccupation with Security

We are part of a culture that is greatly preoccupied with security and makes no bones about it. Aaron Stern recently wrote a book called *Me: the Narcissistic American*, which says that the human creature has always done better in history when primarily preoccupied with the struggle for survival. We're at our best when life is on the line. When we are struggling merely to survive, then choices are virtually made for us. We don't have to do a lot to order our

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lives. It's all pretty simple. But, he says, when survival is fairly well assured, we are not satisfied and give ourselves to trying to establish other kinds of security. We want more and more assurances. So, he says, we end up fighting for security like we were fighting for survival.

That's about right. What do we lust for as a culture more than security? And security seems to be such a worthy concern. The problem is not that we have concerns about security. The problem is we seldom know when we have enough. That's the problem. It's the narcotic quality of affluence. It's not that security is bad. It's that we seldom know when we have enough.

I remember my first overnight camp-out as a Boy Scout. I had never been on such an adventure before. My mother was one of those people who was very concerned about everybody's well-being, and I was an only child until I was 10. I don't suppose my mother had ever been on a camp-out either. She came from a rural Texas background, but she'd never been on a camp-out. So, together, we began to prepare for every possible eventuality on that camp-out. She was concerned that nothing come up that I not be prepared to deal with. I took so much stuff on the camp-out that nearly everybody in the troop ended up carrying something of mine. As I think back about that, that becomes a pretty good parable of how a lot of Americans live all the time.

In the average church, stewardship is synonymous with giving. When you say stewardship, that's almost like sticking the offering plate in somebody's face. We've almost ruined a beautiful concept that has to do with everything that touches the Christian faith and life.

One reason we are not the stewards we ought to be is that we have never really found an answer to the question, "What is enough?" There's

“One thing very hard to miss if you look carefully into the New Testament is that one of Paul’s great preoccupations was taking up an offering.”

a history behind our situation especially for people who have vivid memories of the Depression. We know what life was like then and can understand something of how people could be confused about when there is enough security, having come from a time when there was so little. But this is only part of our problem.

Being Satisfied to Have Enough

Some of our sensitive Christian spirits are developing what is called a theology of enough. Why? There is a recognition that we live in a world of limited resources and that we live in a world where many, many people die of hunger. We live in a world where most people are personified by Lazarus—not the one raised from the dead, but the one who ate the crumbs from the rich man's table—and where we are sort of personified in the rich man. A theology of enough emphasizes that we have a responsibility under God to refrain from taking and keeping more than will do. A theology of enough calls us away from the kind of security building that so easily becomes unnecessary accumulation and wasteful consumption. A theology of enough would have us listen and see if God is not saying, in the words of John V. Taylor's excellent book, "Enough is enough."

One thing very hard to miss if you look carefully into the New Testament is that one of Paul's great preoccupations was taking up an offering. We Baptists didn't invent the offering, we just make good use of it. To understand the writings of Paul, we really need to understand that this was one of his major concerns, taking up an offering among these scattered churches for the mother church in Jerusalem.

This offering is referred to often in Paul's writings. Second Corinthians 8:10-15 is one such passage:

And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality. As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack' (RSV).

Paul's concern is that both the givers and the receivers have enough. He uses this classic example of the mysterious manna which God gave the people of Israel even before he gave them the Law. The Israelites, wandering in the wilderness, complained about many things. Among them was, of course, short rations, not having enough to eat. They were remembering all the good food they'd had in Egypt. "Things may have been bad, but at least we had food to eat. We wouldn't have starved to death if we had stayed in Egypt, and now it looks like that's going to be our end."

So God promised meat in the evening and bread in the morning, and quails came at the closing of the day and manna fell in the morning. The people were warned by Moses not to gather more than enough for



one man and his family for one day. Enough, but not more than enough. Nobody was to be short of rations. Enough, but enough for only one man and his family for one day, and not more than that.

Some of these very practical Israelites were concerned about security. There they were, out in the wilderness, and if it was good to have enough for today, it was better to have enough for tomorrow, too. But the mysterious manna became only enough. Not more, not less. Scripture says, "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack." Those who tried to hoard the manna found that it stunk and bred maggots.

Acting in Faith

Paul said to the Corinthian Christians, "I'm not asking you to suffer or be deprived, but to share out of

your abundance with those in need, and someday they may do the same for you so that there may be an equality with each having enough." What the Israelites and the first Christians both had to learn was that living with enough really does require faith in God. Of course, that was a part of the point of the manna. Faith in a daily providing God who numbers the very hairs of our heads, faith in a God who cares in that kind of detail, is meant to free us from the excessive concern that so easily slides over into idolatry.

The concern about security and enough begins as a responsible, mature concern, but it very subtly develops into sin and into bondage to the things of this world. We are easily deluded about our needs, what we think we need, about what constitutes enough. We are captives to our culture in that most of us think subconsciously, if not consciously,

that there would be a little more abundant life even for us if we just had a little more stuff. The average American says, wherever he is on the economic ladder, "If I just had 25 percent more, that's all I need."

The Word of God is that life would be more abundant if we gave more and trusted God more, specifically if we trusted him with our anxiety about having enough. The sufficiency of God as provider is testified to most by those who have lived through deprived situations. This is an irony, too. It's those of us who have the most who worry most about having enough.

As we ponder our responsibilities in a hungry world, Christians need to understand that enough really is enough. Biblical faith demands it.

David Matthews is pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina and Chairman of the Christian Life Commission.

Ministering to the Hungry Overseas

by John Cheyne

Try to picture yourself looking out into the world which you see and hear about from the TV telethons that have graphically portrayed the little potbellied children, the staring eyes, the dull hair, all the signs of hunger in massive numbers of children around the world. Some 3,200 Southern Baptist missionaries are scattered around in 100 countries. They are faced with this kind of dilemma day in and day out.

I want to share with you the program of Southern Baptists through the Foreign Mission Board in terms of *what* we are attempting to do and *why* we are attempting to do it the way we are.

We can say very truthfully as a denomination that we have always been concerned about hungry people. Read the story of Lottie Moon and her sacrificial life and one recognizes that this has not been a void in our mission activity overseas. Benevolent ministries have been part and parcel of the Southern Baptist Convention's concern.

It was not until the 1970s that Southern Baptists began to manifest a growing concern about world hunger. Initially, it was not at the point of world hunger that we saw this concern translated into action as much as it was in response to cataclysmic crises. The cyclone in Bangladesh, the earthquake in Guatemala and storms like Fifi were some of those things that really accelerated interest in terms of that type of ministry.

It was not until 1978, when Southern Baptists put World Hunger Day on the denominational calendar, that they began to respond significantly enough to where the Foreign Mission Board was put into somewhat of a dilemma. In 1977 we had received \$889,190 in designated giving. The 1978 World Hunger Day stirred things up and that amount was just



Cheyne

about doubled—\$1,747,999 was given. It was phenomenal as far as our response was concerned. The next year that amount was almost doubled—\$3,090,512 came in. The next year it was almost doubled again—\$5,669,863 came in.

The Foreign Mission Board, in facing the overwhelming response of our convention, had to ask, "What shall we do to respond effectively?" Our convention had designated the Foreign Mission Board as the appropriate channel through which these funds ought to go and through which they ought to be administered in the overseas setting, just as the Home Mission Board was designated in the national setting.

After the Second World War, a dichotomy of theology among conservative Christians began to become more pronounced. Some thought that our only mandate was bringing people to salvation. The end! That's it! This was as far as we really needed to go. Slogans like "A Million More in '54" spoke primarily of adding to the numbers in our convention and the number of our churches.

That same kind of thinking is similarly reflected in some of the strategies of Bold Mission Thrust which

say, "All right, by the year 2000 we want to preach the gospel to everybody in the world. We want to enter 125 countries. We want 5,000 missionaries proclaiming the gospel."

Even though these goals are wonderful and challenging, there may be a subtlety in this that we sometimes overlook. It is possible, in our enthusiasm to carry out our evangelistic mandate, that we could become callous—too concerned about reporting our successes statistically in terms of the number of churches started and the number of people reached. There is a subtle possibility that we could carry out our programs and never ever really care about people. It is possible! It's possible that we could get involved in soul-winning as our end in itself to the point that we overlook another dynamic of the whole gospel.

You know what one of my frustrations is as a staff member of the Foreign Mission Board? It is that in many parts of our convention, among many of our strongest believers, social ministries is a bad word. I hear some of them say, "I am involved in a spiritual ministry," and, "They are involved in a social, physical ministry." (As if physical and social concern had no spiritual implications.) It is a little shocking in some respects that we are still at the place where we have to convince ourselves that feeding the hungry is indeed spiritual as well as being biblical.

When money is given to your Foreign Mission Board, to your Home Mission Board, what do you expect to happen to it? What is the vision that Southern Baptists have for us to accomplish with this money?

Now, I have heard repeatedly the concern expressed, "How much of my hunger dollar is going to get over there?" That's a good concern. We at the Foreign Mission Board say to

“...if the incarnational life of Jesus Christ is not being manifested in and through your life, it is incredible to say that you’re related to him.”

Southern Baptists, “100 percent of that dollar goes overseas to be administered through our missionaries and through our national churches; none of it is used for administration or promotional costs here in the United States.” That’s a very small part of the story.

There needs to be something more. There needs to be an understanding of where we think we are going, why we are doing what we are doing, and how we go about doing it. We must be faithful, not only to Southern Baptists who have designated that money, many times very sacrificially; we must be faithful also to our Lord in carrying out what we have referred to at the Foreign Mission Board as holistic ministry.

I feel that it is important to talk about some philosophical undergirdings in which I believe deeply and which the Foreign Mission Board has accepted. I believe our missionaries are responding affirmatively in terms of how we go about carrying out this kind of ministry.

Those who are writing on the subject have talked about two basic mandates that we have in terms of mission, i.e., the carrying of the gospel overseas. They talk about the evangelistic mandate and then they talk about the cultural or ministry mandate, which includes all of those concerns that we put under social ministries such as hunger and justice.

Unfortunately, these two kinds of emphases have produced a dichotomy in approach that talks about the evangelistic mandate on the one hand and the cultural (ministry) mandate on the other hand. Where do we place our emphasis? The real issue, though, is not a question of how we can carry out these two mandates, but rather how we can scripturally integrate both the evangelistic and the ministry man-

dates without compromising one or the other.

I have come under a deep conviction that our basic task overseas is that of reconciling people to Jesus Christ. However, the Scripture emphasizes the unity of reconciliation regarding both proclamation and ministry. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (NASB), Paul gives us a very interesting concept: “Now all these things” that he’s been talking about “are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. . . . be reconciled to God.”

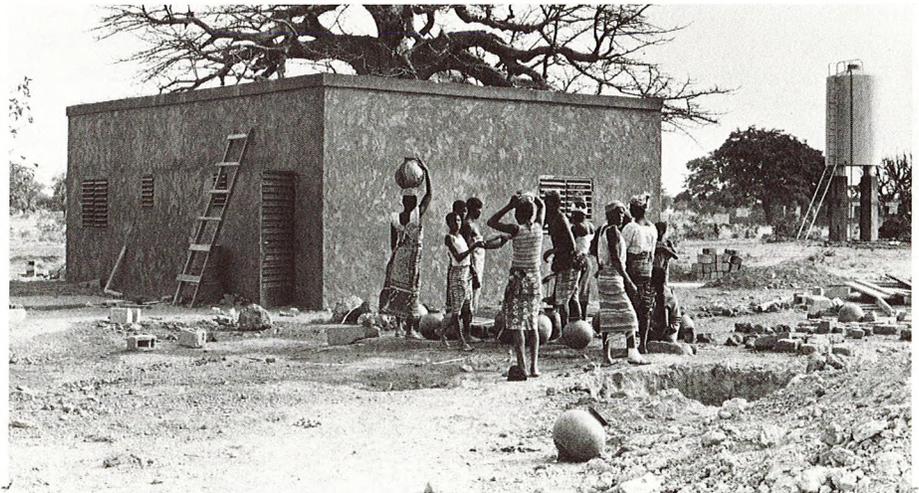
Paul says two things in this passage. We’ve been given the message of reconciliation, but we have also been given the ministry of reconciliation. I think we are rather naive to presume that, when we have gone out into the world to give the message or the word of reconciliation, we have also delivered the ministry of reconciliation. One has to be in a primitive society only a very short time to recognize that poverty,

superstition, injustice, cultural background and habits can separate persons from the fullness of the life of Christ just as much as any other barrier. I think our ministry is not just to deliver the message, but to bring people to a place where they can fully manifest the incarnational life of Jesus Christ. Humans basically are in bondage.

The primal question asked by the son of Adam who says, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” keeps echoing all the way to the New Testament. Jesus answered a similar question (Who is my neighbor?) pointing to this relationship and gave us the story of the good Samaritan. So the questions, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” and “Who is my neighbor?” are essentially the same question. Now what I believe Jesus is saying is that if the incarnational life of Jesus Christ is not being manifested in and through your life, it is incredible to say that you’re related to him.

Our Lord doesn’t seem to differentiate between physical and spiritual concerns. He speaks about the whole. We see men letting another man who was lame down through the roof. The Pharisees were all around and Jesus said to that man, “Your sins are forgiven you.” The Pharisees were astounded. And Jesus said, “All right; well, let’s turn it over. Rise up and walk.” You see, both the physical condition and the sin condition have spiritual implications.

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Foreign Mission Board well project in Upper Volta

...Ministering (continued from page 7)

When we get down to dealing with hunger and hurt around the world, we must discover where people are and deal with them in the context of their total situation. Humans are in bondage. Part of that bondage is poverty and hunger. Part of that bondage is superstition. Part of that bondage is ignorance. Part of that bondage is what is often referred to as spiritual; it is a lack of relating to the love of God.

When we go into a group of people who are in a physical kind of bondage as well as spiritual bondage, we are presumptuous to think those people are made totally free after they have accepted Christ as Savior. Poverty is still there. Hunger and hurt and injustice are still there. Reconciliation must still be at work in providing "life more abundant."

Whenever you begin thinking about the hunger problem around our world and you start reading the statistical tables, you can be overwhelmed by the statistics. From 500 million to over a billion people are constantly hungry in our world. Now when you begin to think about that, several questions naturally arise: Where do Southern Baptists fit into that kind of a picture? What is our responsibility? Is the problem so much bigger than we are that there may be a futility in our even beginning to try?

We are very much like the disciples when they looked out at the 5,000. I love the way Jesus handled that particular situation, for he had ministered to the people the whole day long and, looking out at the people, he perceived obviously that they were hungry and that he had a personal responsibility of involvement with them. But, rather than dealing with it alone, he turned to the disciples and he asked them the question, "What do you think we ought to do? Five thousand hungry people are out there." And you recall the response

of the disciples: "Send them home. It is really not our problem. Just get rid of them. That's the way to solve the problem."

I stood with Dr. Rebekah Naylor in Bangalore, India. There are 700 million people in India, probably one of those nations most desperately in need, even though they are one of the few nations in that part of the world that has improved its grain supply over the past few years most significantly. Rebekah had an idea for starting a nutritional village. "We

to me was a string of nurses who were standing around the circumference of the class. They were simply standing by, and I had not observed why they were there, realizing later on they were there as observers. The government was sending student nurses from all over India to the Baptist Hospital at Bangalore to observe a program, to observe a technique, and then to replicate that technique all around the entire country of India. So what was just five loaves and two fishes became the

“So what was just five loaves and two fishes became the seed for something that was growing and developing as a model which could be replicated for an entire country.”

could have a village out on the hospital grounds that would be built just like the places where the people live. After we have treated the mother here in the hospital, send them out into the village for a residential program and train them in how to grow food, how to feed their babies properly and how to take care of them. Then teach them how to feed the children with grains that they can buy right here in India."

The program was a tremendous success. Day after day they would minister to these children, and in the short time I was there, you could see the change take place in the complexion and the vitality and the sparkle in the eyes.

I said to Rebekah, "This is a tremendous thing! I am excited about what you're doing! But Rebekah, you have 25 babies here and that is all we have room for. Yet there are 700 million people in India—what is this among so many? Are we even scratching the surface? Is it worth the effort?" The first thing she said was, "I am only responsible for Rebekah Naylor. I am responsible for what God has laid on my heart and what God has given me to do, and I am going to do all that I can to do what God has directed me to do to alleviate the problem."

But the next thing she pointed out

seed for something that was growing and developing as a model which could be replicated for an entire country.

When we begin looking at what Southern Baptists are going to be involved in, one of the things we have to recognize is that the problem is a lot bigger than we are, even considering how big we are. And we can rationalize sometimes and say, "That is a governmental type problem. It is a U.S.A. aid problem. It is a United Nations problem. It is not really our problem. We cannot feed the millions upon millions of people." And truly, we cannot.

So we at the Foreign Mission Board have come to a conviction and an approach to responding to worldwide need that is in harmony with who we are as Southern Baptists. It emphasizes a holistic approach in those areas where we feel that we have the greatest ability to respond in terms of basic purposes for being on the mission field. We have the resources from the Lord, not just of money, but of commitment and dedication. We have 3,200-plus missionaries around the world in 100 different countries, most of whom know the local language, have learned the local culture, have worked with the national network of churches and understand

something of the infrastructure of those countries. We have in place more administrative personnel than any relief organization, any national body, anybody else in the entire world to carry out a job. There is no other organization that I am aware of which has the type of worldwide organization that Southern Baptists have. I am not saying every one of those 3,200 missionaries is involved in this type of ministry. That would be untrue. But we do have in place career personnel as well as thousands upon thousands of lay volunteers who are willing to go overseas to get involved in these programs.

One of the greatest problems we have as Southern Baptists is the fact that we have the know-how, we have the technology, we have the money, we have the personnel, we have the enthusiasm, we have the motivation to say, "OK, let's go over there and solve the world's hunger problems." At times we do not recognize sufficiently that, if we are going to become involved in dealing with the underlying causes of world hunger, we must be involved in those kinds of ministries which will deal with the underlying problems creating hunger.

Development projects are different from relief projects. Relief efforts are short-term efforts aimed at alleviating a pressing crisis which threatens human survival. Such relief projects usually involve food distribution in an attempt to prevent massive starvation brought on by drought or by some disaster. Development projects are long-term efforts which attempt to deal with the underlying causes of hunger, starvation, and malnutrition. Such efforts involve digging water wells, building water systems and providing well-baby clinics.

Development projects have the goal of establishing programs or efforts which will be self-sustaining. They are dependent for their success upon local participation, self-reliance and the potential present in a given community.

Development projects have a number of characteristics:

- Projects should be targeted to



the needs of the people as perceived by the people receiving the ministry, rather than the needs of the people as we perceive them.

- Projects should be developed in terms of a holistic concern for persons, not just in terms of one special concern. Effective development should be concerned with physical, emotional and spiritual needs, recognizing the complexity of human nature.

- Development always begins where people are, with actions which they are capable of making and receiving. It must be appropriate for the society in which it is being planned.

- Development is concerned with the future impact of proposed actions upon the community within which some form of ministry is being considered. Some actions which appear to provide immediate relief often have long-range consequences which are negative.

- Development is a process which enables persons to whom we are

ministering to control their own environment so that they will be able to stabilize, maintain and enjoy a satisfactory quality of life.

Our whole credibility as a denomination is at stake. I personally like to look to 1 John 3, for I think John is speaking about Christian credibility and the relationships that we have, both to the Lord and to people around us. This is a pattern throughout the whole Bible.

According to John, it is incredible to say that you belong to Jesus Christ as his child if sin is the pattern of your life. It is equally incredible to say that you are a child of God, having the incarnational life of Jesus Christ living through you, if you see your brother in need and, as the King James version says, you shut up your "bowels of compassion" against him (1 John 3:17).

Incredible!

John Cheyne is human needs ministries consultant, Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention.

Ministering to the Hungry in the United States

by Nathan Porter

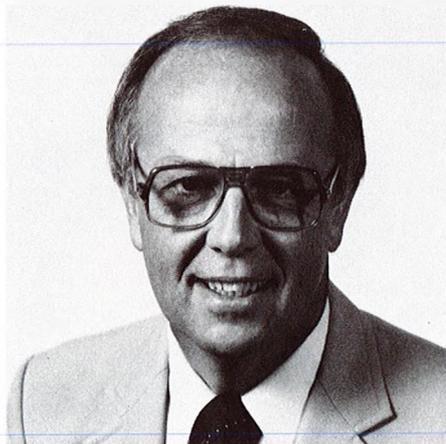
This year during the Home Mission Week of Prayer I was in Lynchburg, Virginia, and it was fantastic to be in many churches to speak. The first one was an 8:30 breakfast and I was surprised that in a small church 45 adults showed up for an 8:30 breakfast on Sunday morning. Two ladies told me that they were dying to come "because we are so anxious to hear you. We are wondering what you're going to say because we don't know of any hunger in the U.S."

Well, hunger does exist in the U.S. In 1968 a study of poverty and hunger in the United States was done and it uncovered much malnutrition, particularly in Appalachia and other Southern areas.

Programs were developed that primarily benefited the farmer. But they benefited the poor and hungry through food stamps, commodities, school lunches, the WIC program for women and infants and children, and other programs which have reduced greatly what we would call severe, acute malnutrition in the United States. We never hear stories of doctors writing death certificates saying, "Cause of death: starvation."

The nutrition problem in the United States is a problem of poverty. There isn't a scarcity of food. I'm always amazed when we go to the grocery stores at how much food is available. The problem is poverty. So many people are just too poor and do not have the money to buy the food that their families and their children need. The economic recession, unemployment, underemployment, and budget cuts in social services to the poor, which are misplaced national priorities, have raised the poverty level to alarming proportions in the United States.

Approximately 35 million Americans live under the poverty level set by the government at \$774.00 per



Porter

month income for a nonrural family of four. So 35 million people, according to U.S. government figures, live below the poverty level, which would be just barely what we consider minimal in the United States. But an additional estimated 35 to 40 million people are near-poor, just above that poverty level. They are struggling to provide their families with essentials such as shelter, food, transportation, and medical care.

Unemployment in the nation is now a little over 11 million persons. One of five American workers was unemployed in 1982, at least for some period of time. Churches and food centers which are providing emergency food relief are seeing the new poor, waiting to receive a gift of food. They formerly were middle-class Americans, who now stand silent and ashamed.

Today we are hearing reports of the magnitude and scope of malnutrition in America. The Southeast Michigan Coalition on Hunger in Detroit is now telling us, as is the office of the mayor, that infant mortality in Detroit is on the increase because of malnutrition.

The governor of Michigan last winter declared Detroit a human disaster area when unemployment levels

reached the same as those of the Depression of the 1930s. In Detroit the hunger problem became a high priority with the news media in the city, and the police precincts and public buildings became collecting centers for food drives. Southern Baptists, through the leadership of our missionary, Bill Lawson, led 12 churches to provide food distribution centers in the greater Detroit area through a program called Christian Love in Action.

Jim Queen serves in Chicago at the Uptown Baptist Church where the poverty level in his area is 70 percent. At Christmas a thousand people lined up outside the church ministry center to receive the food baskets that the church gives out traditionally at Christmas. He said that several families were standing there with their barefoot children, dressed in T-shirts and cotton dresses, waiting to receive food baskets. Malnutrition is visible and evident to Jim as he observes skin disease and gums bleeding in the ministry center.

A couple of years ago Uptown Baptist Church was the only church providing any kind of relief ministry or development ministry in that area. But because the need is so great and has become so evident, 12 other churches have joined and now cooperate in the ministry. The church's ministries are in cooperation with the health department, with the community junior college, with the high school, with other service organizations, and with these other churches. They provide many ministries: emergency food relief, a daily feeding program for senior adults, refugee services, literacy classes, English classes, citizenship classes for the refugees, tutoring programs, sewing clubs, canning projects, and job training.

David Walker is director of Christian social ministry for the Greater Cleveland Baptist Association. He asked me in January to help do a metropolitan hunger survey, the first one that Southern Baptists have ever done. It was exciting. To me it felt like 20 degrees below zero, but it must have been about 3 degrees—a very appropriate time to learn about poor people.

David had enlisted lay people and the pastors from the churches. Twenty-nine showed up that morning, and we had donuts and coffee and made the assignments. He had made appointments with about 29 agencies and in twos, like evangelistic teams, we went out to interview the mayor's office, the employment security division, the welfare department, hunger centers, different church organizations, and soup kitchens to gain an awareness of what was happening in Cleveland.

As they came back that afternoon these WMU directors and pastors and others who had gone were saying, "Man, it was an eye-opener. I was not aware." They told story after story of their shock at discovering the crowds at the employment agency or the welfare department. They could hardly get in the lobbies, could hardly walk up the hallways or stairways, it was so crowded with poor people. And so it was at the hunger centers and wherever they went.

They discovered 116,000 people in Greater Cleveland receiving emergency food relief; an estimated 45,000 required it but were not receiving it. By the fifteenth of the month, many families run out of food stamps and money and are dependent on the assistance of others.

Before the Associational Missions Committee could develop a strategy and request churches to provide the resources and volunteers and ministries in their own church buildings, many of these began ministries because they had experienced and seen it firsthand.

A pastor discovered a need at one of the hunger centers. The center

“Twelve percent of all families in the United States are headed by women, but 50 percent of all poor families in the United States have a woman as head of the household.”

didn't have anyone to transport food from the food bank to the hunger center. The pastor thought of two men in his church who were kind of depressed about early retirement and had nothing to do, watching TV all day. Both had transportation. Immediately they began providing the transportation for the food. Other ministries were developed there.

David Walker, the missionary, pretty much conveys what we feel is Southern Baptist strategy for ministry to needy people. He says, "I see the 35 churches in Cleveland as centers of ministry to the poor and needy people."

Who are the poor and hungry people in the United States? Well two-thirds of the poor people in the United States are white. Thirty-one percent of blacks live in poverty. Twenty-six percent of Hispanics live in poverty, whereas approximately 11 percent of whites do. The South, where Southern Baptists are the strongest, has twice the poverty level of the North.

The poor people are young mothers rearing children alone, families of workers who have lost their jobs, young people who lack training and skills for today's industry, migrants, seasonal farm workers, undocumented refugees, the elderly, the handicapped, children, and native Americans.

The poorest people in the United States may be the native Americans, with a per capita yearly income of \$1,450 compared to over \$8,000 for other Americans. Unemployment among the American Indians is 40 to 60 percent, but with the Sioux Indians there is 82 to 86 percent unemployment.

Migrant workers are among the poorest inhabitants of our nation. Isn't it ironic that the people around Heritage and Monticello and Warren,

Arkansas, who right now are picking tomatoes, are closest to the food that you and I will be eating, are actually the poorest and are having the most serious problems with social injustice, lack of education for their children, and health care? Ninety percent of migrants, seasonal farm workers, the undocumented live on a poverty level and lack the assistance and medical care which we take for granted. I've been told that only one of 5,000 children of migrant parents graduates from high school!

We talk about the feminization of poverty. That is sort of a glamorous term. But what we are saying is that poverty in our nation looks like a woman. Two of three adults who are poor in the United States are women. Twelve percent of all families in the United States are headed by women, but 50 percent of all poor families in the United States have a woman as head of the household. High rates of unemployment and menial underemployment are problems which plague women more than men.

Women earn 59 cents for every dollar that a man earns. Women are frequently hired for many executive positions they hold because employers don't have to pay them as much. "It just doesn't take as much money for a woman to live as a man." Many employers supposedly still believe that! If a man had the job that my wife has, he would be a partner and he'd be making close to three times what she's making.

Children are hurting badly. Glen Harada, missionary in Hawaii, crying over the phone says, "The people hurting the most here in Hawaii are women and children, and children suffer the most." I thought everybody was having fun over there! One of

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. . .Ministering

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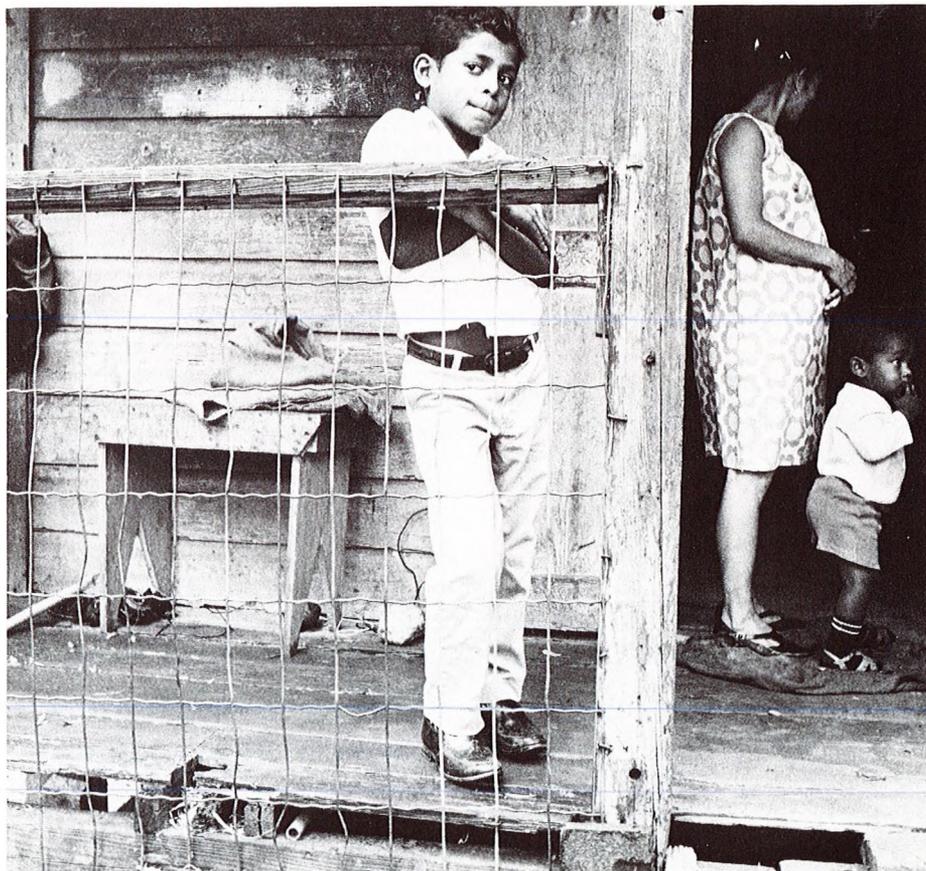
five children in the United States lives in poverty. *One of five.* Forty-three percent of all black children live in a poverty home. If you see black kids playing, you can say one out of two lives in poverty. With Hispanics, it is one child out of three.

Seven million children in the United States have no medical care. One of three has never seen a dentist. One of five reaches the age of 18 as a functioning illiterate; they cannot read a daily newspaper or fill out an application form for a job. The problem of poverty in the United States is not lazy men living off welfare, but people who are helpless and worried, not able to help themselves. And we as laborers are going to have to be there to help them because they are not able to help themselves.

The average income of the family household which is the recipient of food stamps is \$349.00 per month. Eighty percent of all food stamp recipients are the elderly, the single-parent families, the women with small children, the handicapped, and the children.

These figures and these numbers portray a bleak picture. Why is it that we haven't seen them? Middle-class Americans, and unfortunately Southern Baptists are there, have been so busy on our expressways of life that we've never really taken an exit to become involved and to relate to the poor people.

For many of us the only real contact that we have with poor people is at the grocery store. We go to the grocery store and the way our children eat, almost any trip costs 75 bucks. Then someone in front of us buys a small amount and pays with food stamps. Many middle-class Americans get mad and angry. This leads to the bias, to the bad stories about the poor and about food stamps. I believe it's the only awareness level that maybe most of our people have about the poor.



Awareness has increased among Southern Baptists in the few churches in northern Minnesota and the Iron Range area because, all of a sudden, churches discovered that they only had three people employed in the church: the pastor, the postman, and some other servant in the community. Everybody else was unemployed. This has happened in many churches who discovered their own people unemployed and so became concerned and started ministering to them. Then the unemployed say, "All my buddies are unemployed." And so the awareness level is increasing dramatically because unemployment is now happening to those who have been middle class.

Our home missionaries are deeply involved with the problems of hunger and poverty. We have approximately 350 Christian Social Ministries missionaries involved in Baptist centers and as directors of Christian social ministries. Most of them are involved in weekday ministries to former prisoners, to families and youth in juvenile courts, to the illiterate, to single-parent families, and to the aging. All

these ministries are really addressing the causes of poverty. These missionaries are doing these direct services, working in cooperation with government agencies, social agencies, with other churches and denominational groups, and interfaith task forces.

Also these missionaries work with churches: Our strategy is to not do it ourselves but to lead churches to minister, for we look at our thousands of churches as centers of ministry. The churches are already there. The needs are around them. The missionaries, our staff, and I are available to help churches to develop these ministries, so we work with associations and with churches for the development of ministries.

Southern Baptists are involved. Giving to missions through the Cooperative Program, the Annie Armstrong Offering, and special hunger offerings supports and sustains these missionaries and enables us to call others. Designated gifts to domestic hunger are now used by these missionaries. In 1979 the Home Mission Board received \$7,000 desig-

nated hunger offerings, \$185,000 in 1980, \$145,000 in 1981, and \$250,000 in 1982.

These monies have been welcomed. Because of the limited funds available and because of the immediate, urgent need for food, they have been used almost exclusively in emergency food relief. We usually provide a three-day supply of groceries for a family who has been referred by someone else for this assistance. The Home Mission Board has guidelines for the use of hunger funds and procedures for the requests. Requests come from missionaries, but also from individual local churches.

I want to outline a national hunger challenge to Southern Baptists:

1. We need to be aware, be informed, and stay alert to the growing number of poor people in the U.S. and the increasing problems they face for survival.

2. Southern Baptists can influence public policy and practice responsible Christian citizenship through advocacy on behalf of the poor. Local, state, and national representatives will listen to Southern Baptists. We can be a strong, positive influence on behalf of the poor, if we will communicate our concern for social justice and fairness in public policy. Poverty is a national problem and responsibility. When the government builds its arsenals of germ warfare and nuclear arms, and at the same time decreases or eliminates services to the poor, it reflects the very character of the nation's people and the priorities we have as persons. The government is us; we are the nation.

3. Baptist pastors must preach the whole Bible rather than only selected passages. The message of the Bible is the hope of the poor, the destitute, the economically oppressed.

4. Baptist churches and Baptist people are called to love, support, and affirm those in the community who provide services to the poor through welfare programs of food stamps, public health, employment, and senior adult services. These public servants are the people in our

community who embody the very greatness of our nation—the nation's caring for those who are unable to help themselves. We need to become the friends of these community servants; visit with them in their places of work; invite them to lunch; pray with them; ask them to share their vocation and services to groups in the church.

One of the strongest deterrents to the perpetuation of poverty is the public school. We should be their best allies and greatest supporters. Public schools are not our competitors or institutions to enforce our religious convictions. They offer hope for our youth and nation.

ment provisions for women employees must assure equal pay for equal responsibilities. We cannot affect economic justice in the community until it exists in our local churches and institutions.

7. Evangelism must be biblical, gospel centered, and Christlike. The gospel cannot be limited to words alone, no matter how redemptive these words may be. In order for the church to be true to itself, our task of evangelism must minister to the totality of a person's life. Evangelism must include love in deed and action which touches all of life.

8. Southern Baptists must sound a clear, prophetic voice on issues

“The gospel cannot be limited to words alone, no matter how redemptive these words may be.”

5. Baptist families and their homes must become centers of ministry to the needy! Most Southern Baptist families have heard Bible preaching and teaching all their lives. It is time to put into practice what has been learned. The home must become a center of ministry and the family a servant of the community. On special occasions and for family dinners, we can invite as guests into the home seasonal farm workers, transients, ex-prisoners, welfare and food stamp recipients, refugees, internationals, the elderly poor, and others.

Genuine love and strength in the home comes not only when parents and children love one another, but when the family offers itself as servants to minister to the needy in the community.

6. Southern Baptists must practice social justice in the local church and in Baptist institutions. People support must have priority over building and program support. We must evaluate personnel policies, benefits, and salaries of all personnel including custodial, food services, and secretarial personnel. Minimum wage earners make only 82 percent of the poverty level. Salaries, benefits, and retire-

which relate to the basic causes of national hunger: the plight of women, children, the elderly, the handicapped, medical and dental care, illiteracy, drug and alcohol abuse, inadequate education and skill development, and more.

9. We need to increase mission support through education, prayer, and giving to missions through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions. The call to mission service must always be heard. And in turn, the called, both men and women, must find open doors for service through the church.

10. Southern Baptists must develop ministries to the needy from local church resources. It is easy to be overwhelmed with so many urgent needs and to become frustrated to the point of inaction. Local church resources in mission action volunteers, spiritual gifts of service, and the liberality of the people will determine what ministry to develop.

Nathan Porter is national consultant for domestic hunger, Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention.

Ministering to the Hungry through the Local Church

by Pat Ayres

A critical dimension of the hunger problem is the role of individuals and of local churches in responding to the hungry. It is imperative for us to come to the issue of domestic and world hunger out of our commitment to Jesus Christ. We do that because we understand that Christ came, that he gave himself for us, and in response to his sacrifice, we will turn and give ourselves for others.

We cannot set about to investigate hunger simply as an issue. We are compelled as Christians to identify with the hungry as individuals whom we understand to be created like ourselves in the image of God.

That understanding develops a deep solidarity among all people. It instructs every action that we take. The beginning of our commitment and of our looking at what we are going to do as individuals in churches comes in the acknowledgement of our relationship to God.

The hunger problem is real. We need not belabor that point. But if it is real, how do we make it come alive to the people in our congregations? How do we make it come alive to us? How does hunger not just happen on World Hunger Day?

If we as Baptists do nothing else, I think we have developed an approach to education and to worship which brings people to commitment, into a reorientation of their lives to Jesus Christ. In the context of these gifts, we can present the whole gospel. We can present our concern for the hungry. If we put our hearts to it, even preaching about some other subject we can mention the hungry, we can mention someone's response to it, we can bring this issue to the minds and hearts of our people. In music, in drama, in testimonies, and in educational materials, we have the re-



Ayres

sources for stirring Southern Baptists to minister to the poor and hungry.

There will be in the congregation people with a particular calling and commitment to the hunger issue. Those people need to be getting together, studying, worshiping, learning as a group, nurturing this concern, nurturing one another, and bringing the things that they're learning to the church. There is real value in a hunger committee, a hunger study group, a hunger prayer group, a Christian Life Committee, of people who are supporting one another in this interest and concern and are raising it before the congregation as there are times and opportunities that are appropriate.

If we get serious about looking at the hunger in our world and in our communities, we will be called to some acknowledging and adjusting of our values, our priorities, and our life-styles. We will be confronted with the reality of the vast gap between our affluence and the poverty of the people to whom we want to minister.

I do not know how you have come to deal with this affluence in your own lives. It has been hard for us as a family. We seem to take two steps forward and three or four backward.

But it is a problem we cannot ignore as we look at our affluence relative to the needs of people around us.

The hedonistic treadmill is something that permeates our values in our families. It is something that I am afraid has permeated the values in our churches as well, as we pursue the business of keeping up with the next church, of being bigger and better. As we begin in our churches to reach out and minister to the hungry, we may see the relatively extravagant settings in which we work and worship from a new perspective and seek to alter our priorities.

We need to take a hard look at our priorities and values as a nation. We need to think about our capitalistic perspective of consuming and producing more and more in the face of the kinds of dichotomies of wealth and poverty that face our world. We may have tried to deal with this as an ethical issue in the past. In this time of diminishing economic growth, we may be forced to consider it as an issue of survival.

I am reminded of Carlyle Marney's speech to the consultation on energy sponsored by the Christian Life Commission a number of years ago. He was talking about the limits of the garden in which we live on this earth. He said that we are called to an ethic of parsimony. That is exactly what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 8. We may not be called to suffering, but we need to live at a moderate enough level that others can live well too. As Dorothee Soelle has said, "The hungry are those we let starve." We must come to grips with our life-styles as we face the issue of hunger in our world.

Another thing with which we have to come to grips is our attitude toward the poor. In San Antonio we

were conducting a survey of food pantries so that we could advertise a citywide food collection and distribute the food among the various churches. I called a church in north San Antonio and said, "Do you have a food pantry or any food distribution?" That lady's response was a tirade about how there were not any real poor, how the ones that were poor were not worthy and were idle and slothful.

There seems to be within the American psyche this animosity toward the poor. Some say it is our frontier mentality. Sometimes it is a way of not dealing realistically with the issue. Some scholars say that somehow we have shifted from a belief that the sign of moral depravity is idleness and sloth, to a belief that the sign of moral depravity is poverty. How contrary that is to the biblical passages which point to God's concern for the poor and the oppressed! The more affluent and powerful we become, the more competent we are at ignoring those passages about the rich and the oppressors.

the hungry. It is a mission of reconciliation. Paul was deeply concerned with the reconciliation of the Jewish church with the Gentile church. One of the results of our involvement with the hungry is a ministry of reconciliation between the rich and the poor in our own country, a gap symbolic of the growing dichotomy between the rich and the poor all over the world.

If we are going to become involved, we must look at our motives. Do we want to have an impressive program or feel needed? Churches must not develop a dependency on providing charity to the poor. Jim Sessions of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia has said, "The church's concern for the poor must not become a stake in poverty itself. People have suspected us of that in the past. A sense of mission to the poor cannot be based on a need for poor people to whom we can minister. We must not only alleviate the conditions of poverty and powerlessness, we must end them."

Paul certainly did not anticipate

our priorities, our attitudes and our motives, we are then ready to turn our attention to what we are going to do, how we will respond. Sometimes in our enthusiasm as churches to get on with the task, to do something to get a handle on this problem, we start out without careful planning and without working with others to take a careful look at what is already being done. But one thing I believe is that if we are going to do something in the name of Jesus Christ, it must be top quality, not slipshod, not a duplication, not self-serving. It needs to be appropriate to the needs of the people we seek to serve and it needs to be realistic in terms of the gifts and potentials of the congregation providing the service.

I go to church now at First Baptist Church in Winchester, Tennessee. The Ministerial Association in Winchester formed a Good Samaritan Ministry and most of the churches in the area are working together to distribute food, to provide counseling and emergency relief. Our church has become a part of that. That is an appropriate response in that medium-sized community which has a number of small churches.

On the other hand, First Baptist Church, San Antonio, has been a leader in that urban community providing a soup kitchen, counseling ministries, and a broad array of other services. That church has worked with other groups to fill needs, such as housing for transients, that were not being provided otherwise. The whole approach can be different because of the level of resources of the church and the needs of the community.

An important development in many of our larger cities with which churches can cooperate or perhaps initiate is the formation of food banks that provide warehouses to which grocery stores, wholesalers and manufacturers can send food goods and produce which are not able to be marketed. This is a multiplication ministry of tremendous proportions. These food banks distribute the food

“The more affluent and powerful we become, the more competent we are at ignoring those passages about the rich and the oppressors.”

Anne Davis, who is professor of social work at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, gave a hard-hitting talk recently in Virginia in which she called us to task as Baptists as we become more affluent for not only failing to identify with the cause of the poor, but for being silent in the face of the cuts in the programs for the poor in our own country. Paul says it was easier for the Macedonians who were penniless to come forth with a generous offering than for the Corinthians, out of their wealth, to identify with the poor people of Jerusalem.

Christians reaching out to feed the hungry must identify with them and be involved with them. Our mission is more than just a mission of feeding

that the result of his offering would be the perpetuation of the poverty of the Jerusalem church. In fact, he said, in effect, "The day may come when they will be in a position to help you in your time of need." We must be very careful as we become involved in these kinds of issues that we watch our motivations, to be sure that we are wanting to deal with people as brothers and sisters in Christ, as fellow creations of God, and not for our own good, to alleviate our own guilt or to propagate our own image in the community.

Having acknowledged our call in Christ to be concerned for the hungry, having raised the awareness of our people to the reality of the need, having taken a hard look at

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...Local Church

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and produce that they gather to the feeding programs and food distribution centers throughout the community. In addition to these more conventional programs, our imaginations can be stirred to begin innovative programs.

There is a pastor in California who looked at all the produce that was not being gathered in the fields and thought about the concept of gleaning in the Scripture. He started gathering volunteers and working with the farmers to go out into the fields when the produce was not going to be picked and to gather it up and distribute it to the poor. This started out as a very small project. This one man gathered up the other people in his community. Now there are 400 volunteers and they collected 500 tons of produce last year!

It is easy for us to get carried away, is it not, and excited because these are activities with which we can become involved and see results? We need to do that, but the other side of all of this activity is advocacy. We simply must not pass out a cup of soup with one hand and with the other hand vote to perpetuate the systems which are putting those people in poverty to begin with. We cannot decry the dualism which separates people's spiritual needs from their physical needs and not decry the dualism which okays our helping individuals and does not advocate our addressing the institutions which are oppressing them. We must be concerned with both charity and justice.

We must help people understand how to avail themselves of the programs which are available to them, to which they are entitled. We can do that at the local level. We can become advocates in the community for better housing, for better health care, for whatever are the concerns and needs of the poor. If we are involved with them, we will know

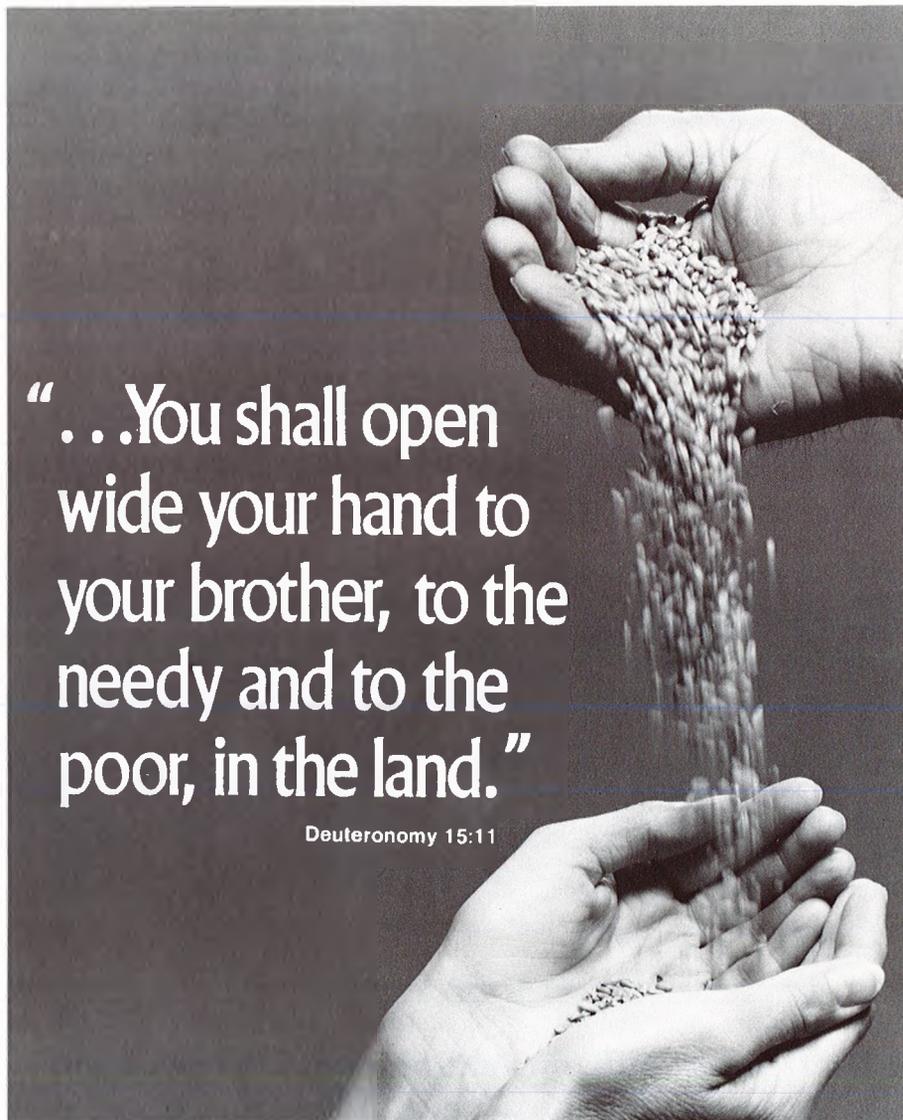
them well enough to know where they are hurting and will be willing to walk with them into the corridors of power to deal with the issues that are of concern to them.

We also must be good stewards of our citizenship. We have seen over the past few years cuts in food stamps, cuts in the number of people who are eligible to receive them, threatened cuts in the program for women, infants, and children (WIC), cuts in school nutrition programs, cuts all across the board in terms of the nutrition programs on the domestic level. The 23 percent of U.S. households with incomes of less than \$10,000 will have absorbed 40 percent of all the reduction in federal spending for individual benefits in the years 1982-1985.

We can do something about that. One of the reasons the Congress has

put its foot down this session is that people have come to say, "This is enough." The churches have gotten together to come and to speak to the legislators about what these cuts have meant in terms of human lives.

But it is not only at the domestic level that we must come to grips with the effect of our public policy on the poor. In spite of the increase in food production in many countries, the poverty level has increased. Often that is because the increased production has been for export and not for domestic food consumption. Bread for the World and other concerned citizens supported the introduction of language into the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act to ensure that increased production and export of sugar and beef as a result of the bill does not harm the



“...You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.”

Deuteronomy 15:11

nutritional health of the people in the region or result in increased concentration of land ownership. That language has moved through the Congress with the legislation. People that were on the alert have been able to put into legislation proposals to protect the interests of the poor.

We have spoken in this conference of the skewed priorities reflected in the over \$600 billion that the countries of the world are spending on defense and military-related expenditures every year. That is an issue for us. It is a hunger issue. As we face the legislative agenda, we have the opportunity to talk about the alternatives to this kind of dependency on weaponry. We could be influencing the minds and hearts of people with food and with education.

I want to share with you some language that calls us back to a vision we had a few years ago in our Convention. I hope we have not lost that vision.

Let Southern Baptist churches be boldly involved in championing justice for the oppressed, providing food for the hungry, supporting changes in those laws and systems which abuse the poor while providing loopholes for the rich, doing the things that make for peace, and effecting changes where change is needed to support basic human rights. Let Southern Baptist agencies demonstrate by words and deeds unswerving loyalty to Christ, issuing in

“We share hope with people as we bring the whole gospel, the gospel of concern for their needs, and the gospel of concern for their spiritual lives.”

uncompromised and uncompromising commitment to human rights. Let Southern Baptists not be so weighed and found wanting in commitment to God-given and Bible-based human rights.

These words are from the resolution on human rights which was adopted by our Convention in Atlanta in 1978. It is still our challenge, is still our calling, and it still presents the balance between charity and justice that is our mission as Christians as we become involved with the hungry.

I have been reading one of the continuing proliferation of books on the ministry of Mother Theresa in Calcutta reflecting upon what is the tremendous appeal that she has had to people all over the world. Is it not because she is living out the life of a simple servant, loving neighbors, and seeing Christ in the people with whom she works?

Our care for others, our witness to the whole gospel, our concern for the hungry and our advocacy and identification with them draws attention to God. It draws people to him out of thanksgiving to him for what they've seen us do.

But it is not just the people to whom we minister that we draw to

God. It is the people out there in the community who are working with us out of a deep humanistic concern. They often become bitter, hopeless, angry, discouraged, compassion-drained, as they face these needs day after day, as they face these issues in our state and national government year after year. How important it is for them to see people coming to these same issues out of a perspective of hope!

We persevere because we have accepted the grace of Christ, and are attempting to walk with him in his will for our lives, trying to perceive his will for his people and for our country. And when we do that, we walk in hope because God hopes with us and for us and before us.

Perhaps greater than any gift we give to the hungry is this gift of hope. We share hope with people as we bring the whole gospel, the gospel of concern for their needs, and the gospel of concern for their spiritual lives. That is why we are able to continue to say, with Paul, thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.

Pat Ayres is active in hunger concerns and is a member of the Christian Life Commission.

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Living with Gratitude

by C. David Matthews

Sometimes those who have the least seem to be the most grateful and those who have the most, least grateful. While we should be the most grateful people because we have the most, it doesn't quite work that way. It seems sometimes that affluence mitigates against an attitude of gratitude.

A friend of mine in Texas tells of a person who had moved there from South Carolina. But after moving to Texas, he could not forget the trees of the Carolinas and especially wanted some pine trees like those he remembered from his South Carolina boyhood. On a trip back to South Carolina, he dug up a few seedlings and brought them back to his Texas farm. Wanting them to do well, he planted them in the most fertile ground he owned, a plot where cattle for generations had provided endless natural fertilizer. Almost as soon as he planted the trees, they took off. It looked like he was going to grow a forest right there. Everyone was impressed. Then suddenly the trees died. When people asked the farmer why, he would always say, "Well, I guess they just couldn't stand all that prosperity."

Taking Things for Granted

That's not unlike what prosperity can do to us. There are probably, at the risk of oversimplifying, two kinds of people who are ungrateful: those who have nothing and those who have everything.

When we are prosperous, we tend to take things for granted, especially once we have adjusted to a certain

“It may be that we are approaching a day when God will deprive us or when history will bring us to the point of deprivation.”

level of affluence or prosperity. It's not only easy for us to take what we have for granted, it's easy for us to assume that we deserve what we have. How can we be grateful when we have never known anything else and when we assume that whatever we have we have because we deserve it?

This is one of the problems with today's younger people, and the dividing line for many is the Depression period. Some who lived through it have a much stronger sense of appreciation for the affluence that we all enjoy now. But younger people, who have never known anything but the level of affluence they know now, have a hard time being as grateful. We are, for the most part, not a people who have "come out of great tribulation," to use a phrase from Revelation. We are the people who bask in the sunshine of our country's prolific prosperity. We are the privileged of the earth and that tends to dull our sense of gratitude.

Here are two children. One of them is very poor and one of them is very rich. You walk up and give each one an ice cream cone and it's obvious that the one who may never have had ice cream is going to be more grateful than the one who has money in his pocket to buy all the ice cream he wants.

One of my dad's older brothers, who grew up in Van Zandt County

of East Texas, was taken to town as a little boy and at the general store was presented with his first taste of ice cream. Now, think about that. Can you imagine that? His response has become part of our family tradition. One of the men in the family who bought him the ice cream said, "Well, how is that ice cream?" His response was, "It's gooder than gravy!" I like ice cream as much as anybody, but I don't know that I've ever been that impressed by it or that grateful for it.

Seeking to Be Grateful

What can we do about this? Shall we ask God to wound us in order that we might learn gratitude? Shall we pray that God will take it all away so that we will learn to appreciate it? Shall we seek to become like Job who lost everything? Do that if you want. It sounds a little sick to me. It may be that we are approaching a day when God will deprive us or when history will bring us to the point of deprivation. If we will not share, we may come to a time when the have-nots come and take it away from us. I don't know, but I think in the meantime there may be better and more appropriate ways for us to deal with the problem and I want to make a few simple observations.

First, we can discipline ourselves to see our world. One thing we must do as Christians is discipline ourselves to look, force ourselves to see. It is so easy to pretend that the problem doesn't exist. I don't run in the hunger circles in Greenville, South Carolina. I know that hunger

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is there, but I don't have to look at it. If I see it, it will primarily be because I choose to and because I discipline myself.

World Hunger Day is on our denominational calendar. I believe that churches over the long haul just about have to get things on the calendar if they're going to be a part of the ongoing concerns of the church. My experience has been, if you don't get that on the calendar every year, it's easy to forget. I don't

look forward to World Hunger Day. I don't want to have to preach another sermon on that. But a part of what we can do is discipline ourselves to look.

Second, we can discipline our imaginations. We can not only discipline our eyes as we look outward and see the real world as it is, but we can also discipline our imagination, the inner eye. Imagine if you can, that you are in a place where there is absolutely nothing to eat, or imagine that your home is not there.

I take my home most for granted when I am leaving on a long trip. But by the time I get back home, it looks awfully good.

Occasionally I need to imagine what it would be like not to have that house and all that I enjoy that is part of it. It sounds morbid, but maybe we occasionally need to imagine losing all or part of our family. Imagine losing the dearest and most precious person in your life. Imagine losing your faith. Imagine

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Undated Resources For A World Hunger Observance

Please mail your order on the form below to:

World Hunger Resources, Christian Life Commission, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tennessee 37219

World Hunger Day Resource Order Form

(All materials are undated.)

Please mark the materials you need and mail this card today.

QUANTITY	PRODUCT	PRICE	TOTAL
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	"Bible Speaks on Hunger" (3½ x 5½ pamphlet)	8 for 80¢	
	"Bible Studies for a World Hunger Emphasis" (8½ x 11-6 pages)	20 for \$1.00	
	"Feed Me with the Food . . ." (5½ x 8½ bulletin insert)	50 for \$2.50	
	"Issues & Answers: Hunger" (3½ x 5½ pamphlet)	10 for \$1.00	
	"Planning Guide for a World Hunger Emphasis" (8½ x 11-16 pages)	2 for \$1.00	
	"The Unseen Guest" (5½ x 8½ play script)	5 for \$1.00	
	"World Hunger" (11 x 17 hunger awareness placemat)	20 for \$1.00	
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	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES		
	Complete 15-item World Hunger Resource Packet	each \$1.50	
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...Gratitude

(continued from page 19)

what a blackout that would be in your life. I can look back now and be grateful for some of the periods of intense doubt in my life because probably more than anything else those periods have made me grateful

preachers Methodists in the South produced in this century. He said he remembered, as a boy growing up in rural Georgia, hearing the people in his church sing, "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea." When he would hear that hymn, invariably he would get a mental picture of the mill pond there in the little community where he lived, because that was the largest body of water he had ever seen.

“Everybody has some particular gift, the giving of which means life for somebody else and, thus, life for the world.”

for faith. Most people take their faith pretty much for granted. Imagine forfeiting all the forgiveness that you've received so that all the weight of sin is still on you. Imagine not having the Bible. Imagine not having the church.

Third, we can assume or renew in our lives the discipline of giving. Stewardship must have its wider reference, but because we give ourselves to an understanding of stewardship in this broader frame does not mean we are free from the smaller kinds of giving. The discipline of giving is vital. I give to my church, and that discipline is very important for me. It becomes a foundation of whatever other giving I do. Jesus said, "To whom much is given, much is required." That must mean there's a great deal required of me.

There is another mystery in all this. Often I find that giving produces more gratitude in me than receiving. It's very often through my investments in the life of my church, or whatever else, that I am caused to be more grateful than I am when I receive. It really is more blessed to give than to receive.

Doing Something Rather Than Nothing

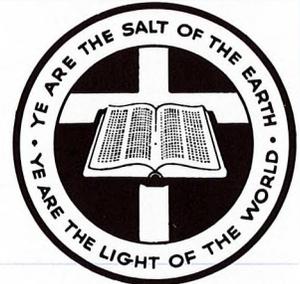
The Methodist bishop, Arthur Moore, spent most of his life in Georgia. He was one of the better

Years later when he was making his transatlantic ocean voyage, he was standing one evening on the deck of the ship and looking from one side to the other. All he could see was water as far as he could see. The words of the hymn came back, "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea." The doing of mercy is God's work and we have but begun to fathom the extent of his redemptive purpose.

But, having said that, it is our work as well. In what may seem to us small and insignificant ways, we can and do participate in the redemption of the earth. We can do something. The fact that we can't do everything is no excuse for not doing something. We must remember God does not measure what we do as we tend to measure what we do. We can all do something. Each one of us has gifts. Everybody has some ways of picking some piece of trash out of the river of life. Everybody has some particular gift, the giving of which means life for somebody else and, thus, life for the world. Everybody can be steward of whatever little half acre of creation is apportioned to you, and with whatever modest skills you have. And if we are faithful in this stewardship with whatever lot the Creator has given us, then God will say at the end, as he said at the beginning, "Behold, it is very good."

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