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LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention



By Foy Valentine
Executive Secretary

So many negative signals are being emitted from such a wide variety of family naysayers today that it would be easy to assume that nobody is helping families, that nobody cares about the family. Not so. Christians individually care; the churches care; and even government cares, as is evidenced by President Carter's announced White House Conference on Families.

Though the family is threatened today by hostile forces without and sinister stresses within, it is a tough, resilient, indestructible institution which requires neither jeremiads nor funeral dirges.

Rather, what the family now requires is some intentional church undergirding with carefully conceived church programs, especially informed Christian teaching, powerfully relevant Biblical preaching, and compassionately implemented supportive ministries which will work together to establish families solidly, grow families consistently, and nourish families faithfully.

And what the family also now requires is some substantially enlarged, intentional societal support with family-protecting laws, family-

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Changes in the Family of the Future

By Wallace Denton

"Nothing is permanent, but change," said Heraclitus 2500 years ago. "Change and decay in all around I see, O Thou who changest not, abide with me," go the lines of a familiar hymn.

Traditionally Eastern cultures have been oriented to the past; Western cultures oriented to the present and future. A preoccupation with the future is a product of modern man. In fact, our preoccupation has given rise to a new group of specialists called "futurists," or "futurolgists." But of course, the reason for this is that change is occurring with such rapidity that no one can escape that "now-when-I-was-a-kid-we-did-it-this-way" feeling. In fact, changes are occurring so rapidly that some of us have become disoriented and confused—"future shock" as Alvin Toffler called it. But these changes have occurred so rapidly, so dramatically, and the shockwaves of their impact on our lives have been so cataclysmic, that no one of us can ignore them.

As a family specialist, I am often asked, as you are, what the future holds for the family. There are those who predict the demise of the family. Some see marriage as hostile to women and would like to see the institution outlawed. However, I am confident that the family in some form is going to survive as far as we can see into the future. At least I am not ready, and see no serious signs of our needing to "sound taps" for marriage and the family. But just as surely as the family of today is different from the family of a century ago, even so will the family a century from now be different from today.

Trends in the Family of the Future

1. Present trends suggest that in the future there will be fewer traditional families comprised of the mother, father, and their dependent children. Demographer Paul Glick says that presently about thirty percent of the children under eighteen do not live with both natural parents (*Journal of Marriage and the Family*, February, 1975). With the divorce rate climbing each year, the number of solo parents is growing. Fortunately, churches are beginning to recognize that these too are families who need ministering to.

This change is reflected in family life as depicted on television. In early television we had Ozzie and Harriet and their boys who lived in their single family dwelling. Then we moved to a time where we had a series of divorced or widowed families, such as "All in the Family," which did not fit our typical concept of the family.

2. There will be a growth of the number of couples living together—both younger and older. Glick reports that the 1970 census revealed that in the 1960s there was an eight-fold increase in the number of heads of households living apart from their parents who were sharing living quarters with a member of the opposite sex. In the first seven years of the 1970s, the Census Bureau reports that there was a 100 percent increase over the 1970 census in the number of people setting up housekeeping with each other (*Indianapolis Star*, 4/16/78).

This is becoming socially acceptable and will probably continue to be so. I was astounded one day to overhear a secretary across the hall from me say to another, "Oh, did you hear that Bill and Alice have announced that they are living together?" We will have engraved announcements!

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3. There will be a continuation of marriage based on mutual satisfaction. "Til death do us part" will continue to be taken seriously by fewer and fewer couples. It is no longer in some marriage ceremonies. While I still believe this is the only way to enter into marriage, this viewpoint will become less and less the norm. "Til our happiness doth cease" will be the basis.

4. Marriage contracts and term marriages may be in vogue long before our deaths. Already some couples are using written contracts, though the legal status of these is not clear. Some, as Virginia Satir, are calling for term marriages of, say, five years which must be renewed. Margaret Mead in a now celebrated *Redbook Magazine* article several years ago, called for a two-stage marriage with the first one easily dissolved if the couple had no children. I fully expect that this will happen, or some form of it, by the turn of the century.

The church has been and will continue to be more accepting of those who divorce. In many churches divorce no longer disqualifies a man to be a deacon—or even its pastor. Glick reports that four out of five who divorce eventually remarry and 90 percent of these do so within the first three years. One prediction has it that by the turn of the century the average number of marriages per person will be 3.5. As noted earlier, already in some large cities, there is a ratio of 1:1 for marriage and divorce. So if for no other reason, the church is having to address itself to the divorced because of their sheer numbers.

"'Til death do us part' will continue to be taken seriously by fewer and fewer couples. It is no longer in some marriage ceremonies. While I still believe this is the only way to enter into marriage, this viewpoint will become less and less the norm. 'Til our happiness doth cease' will be the basis."

5. I expect that the Women's Liberation Movement will be succeeded by a Men's Liberation Movement. In many respects, I think men need liberating more than women. We are burdened down with heavy burdens of what it means to be a man. Most of these expectations ultimately doom us to a sense of failure at some point in life. These burdens exist in all areas: financial, sexual, social, emotional, and physical.

6. Between now and the year 2000, we will be becoming a society of older people. Given the birthrates in the years following World War II and recent birthrates, the percentage of older people will continue to grow. These will grow in political power and their vote will be increasingly courted. Groups such as the Gray Panthers will press the needs of older people and demand to be heard. It is expected that by the year 2000, half of the population will be supported by the other half. Many of the half being supported will be older people. Of course, some of us will be in that older crowd.

Implications of this for the churches is that our churches will also become older.

7. The Women's Movement is having and will continue to have profound affect upon our lives in the church. Today approximately forty-eight percent of the labor force is female. In 1978, for the first time in our history, women in college slightly outnumbered men.

Being educated, emancipated, liberated, and sensitized to ways in which they in the past have been forced to play a supportive, back-seat, behind-the-scenes role, many are no longer willing to play such roles. They have often been underpaid, underrecognized, and underpromoted for the same work.

Education and employment of women have a profound affect on the church:

a. Women want positions of influence in the church. Those who hold responsible positions of influence during the week are less willing to be permitted only to work on the social committee, kitchen committee, and children's committee in the church. More and more of them are wanting to be deacons, trustees, and in other significant positions.

b. It is affecting our ability to get volunteer workers in the church. (Other organizations staffed by volunteers are also affected.) Wives employed during the day usually need to do housework at night. With both husband and wife employed, men and women are more jealously guarding family time. They are less likely to serve on church committees.

8. I expect there will be a rediscovery and renewal of appreciation for the role of the homemaker. While the number of women who are employed outside the home will probably grow, I anticipate a divergent movement when we feel secure enough to reassert the home as an arena calling for the highest levels of skill and primary in helping to mold and shape the lives of all who live there. I expect that many women will discover that for them the world out there is *not* where it is at, that working in an office is also boring and may be less rewarding than the home. In fact, I plan to teach a course the summer of 1979 entitled "The Homemaker as a Small Business Manager" which I see as a step in the direction of re-evaluating the role of homemaker.

9. There will be a growth of child-care facilities outside the home. Of course, this has been going on for some time. But I see fewer women leaving their children with the lady next door and more of them taking their children to child-care centers (perhaps federally subsidized) staffed by professional people. I expect that as the number of women with children move into the labor markets, their unions will demand, and get, free child-care services in a daycare center at or near their plant or office.

10. Couples who stay together in the future will increasingly do so because they choose to. Financial and societal reasons in the past forced many couples to stay together. Their lower divorce rate did not necessarily mean they were happier than today's couples. They simply had no other viable alternative.

Couples today, and couples in the foreseeable future, will be looking for shared meaning, deep communion, a sense of closeness and intimacy; they will look for commitment (though they may have trouble giving it) and the security of feeling that someone accepts them and sees them as a very special person. In all of this they want a sense of vitality and excitement.

"The church is a surrogate family. There are many young people with families in disarray who find in church those who believe in them, trust them, and in a realistic sense become a family to them."

O. Spurgeon English has an idea that I also think is worth promoting. Years ago he said it takes more than mere commitment to the other person to make marriage work. He thinks we also need to be committed to the institution of marriage itself. If we are only committed to the other person, what happens when the flames of warmth and closeness burn low, as they do in every marriage? Then he thinks the commitment to the marriage needs to take over. I think many young couples today may only be committed to each other.

The Church and the Family of the Future

I see the church as having the potential for playing a vital role in the lives of people living in families in the future. But in order to do so, it must continue to address itself to some of man's unchanging needs while being flexible enough to package its message in the idiom of the present. It is a paradox ever changeless, ever changing.

1. The church can meet the family's needs for worship. Eric Fromm is correct when he says that the question is not *whether* man will be religious, but what kind of religion. Man is incurably religious. Men in the future will need to have a sense of the transcendent. They will still need to stand in awe and wonder. They will still need to be put in touch with that which overarches and undergirds their existence. This the church can do.

The finest way for Southern Baptists, or any other denomination, to commit suicide in the future is for them to speak *primarily* to the congregation about social issues instead of speaking to them about God. (I recognize that we cannot and should not avoid social issues which is also suicidal.) When I go to church, I don't want to hear a social or psychological lecture. I know about them. I want to hear what God has to say to me about my situation and what I ought to be doing about some of the conditions around me. And at times I want to celebrate our faith so that I am left with a sense of "How Great Thou Art."

2. The church can help provide a value system for the family and its members. A major function of a religious faith is that it provides a framework through which and in which we can view our existence and understand something of the meaning of our existence, of who I am, and who you are, and how you and I need to relate to each other. In brief, a faith helps to make sense out of all the nonsense around us.

My children need, and I need, a value system by which to live. The value system of the Christian faith is one which is meaningful to me. I still believe it is important to teach children a value system that says that the fruit of God's indwelling Spirit in us is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, and that against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23).

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3. The church aids the family by helping provide family members with a sense of personal identity. That is to say, I believe our Christian faith helps us to know who we are because it gives to us an identity. I am God's child. I am loved. I am a Christian. I am a Baptist. I am a Southern Baptist. I have a belief system. I stand for something. More than this, when I walk into my church, they know me which is also a part of my identity.

We often hear of "identity crises." I see people who have no clear sense of who they are and they are in trouble. They believe nothing and believe everything; they stand for nothing and stand for everything; they will everything and will nothing; they often know what they *don't* believe, but don't know what they *do* believe.

I believe that our church has been a powerful influence in our children's lives in helping to impart to them a sense of who they are. They have a place to stand. They belong some place. And if you know who you are, and what you think, and what you believe and feel good about it, that is an anchor in a stormy sea.

4. The church can be a support group. In a mobile, mass society, it is so easy to get lost and feel alone and abandoned. The church can and does provide small groups within which we can feel known and know; loved and love. When we moved to Lafayette, we felt far from home and alone in a strange community. The first Sunday we went to church, there was the *Baptist Hymnal*, and we felt like we had an old friend. Page 355 had the same hymn on it as home, we had the same Sunday School quarterly, and even the prayers sounded alike. Within a week we had a circle of friends who called us by name and on whom we could call for help.

The church is a surrogate family. There are many young people with families in disarray who find in church those who believe in them, trust them, and in a realistic sense become a family to them. Even for those of us who have come from stable families, members in the church became much like aunts and uncles. Both my wife and I are where we are today because some people in church believed in us and inspired us to stand tall and reach far.

Summary and Conclusion

In the future, most of us will still meet most of our needs for closeness and intimacy in the context of the family. Mass society will force us to meet more of these needs there. The church can provide a common ground in bringing these families together. It can be a vital part of a support system which the nuclear family so badly needs.

Those who decry marriage and children often do so because marriage does demand that we give up some of our individuality. Marriage forces us to grow up, to think of someone else other than ourselves, to give up our adolescent dreams and fantasies. But in return, the family affords us the opportunity to share our lives with others, to have a sense of intimacy, to give and be given to. In the context of the family, we find those who:

Believe in us when we are unbelievable
Trust us when we are untrustworthy
Support us when we are downfallen
Love us when we are unlovable
Stand by us when no one else stands with us
Quarrel with us because they care enough to quarrel.

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Family Patterns in the Bible

Description or Prescription?

By J. Clark Hensley

One young man stated: "If we will just go back to the Bible and have the kind of family they had then, everything will be OK." Sounds logical and simple, doesn't it? But there's a catch. Some of the Bible is *prescriptive* and some is *descriptive*. In the Old Testament patterns described, we are seeing how the people of Israel lived and behaved. In *description* God is not saying, "This is what I want," but He is showing how He worked with people as they were. However, much of the Bible is God's *prescription*—what He desires, expects and even commands.

God's Prescription

In Genesis 1 we read of God's purpose for male and female as His special creation; to image His nature in life, reflect what God is and what God is concerned with, to enjoy His fellowship and respond voluntarily to His love. Male and female are given responsibility over the universe—to keep it in stewardship and enjoy its fruits.

In Genesis 2 we see marriage as a monogamous relationship, one man for one woman, two unique whole persons who unite to form a "oneness." Marriage is not a merger of two half persons to make a whole, but two whole persons forming a unique unit.

Old Testament Description

In the Old Testament, how was the family described? ¹

1. *Patriarchal*. The oldest living male family member was the boss. What he said was not questioned; it was the law.

2. *Extended*. This included the oldest male and his wife/wives, all unmarried sons and daughters, married sons and wives, their sons and wives, their children, the servants and all their wives, sons and their children, their cattle and other animals.

3. *Patrilineal*. The legal descent was through the father's side of the family. The wife took the husband's surname.

4. *Patrilocal*. The location of the family, the family home, was the place where the oldest male member of the family, or his bones, was located.

5. *Polygynous*. The male could have more than one wife or concubine.

6. *Endogamous*. The marriage was to be within the existing family ties. The marriage of first cousins was considered the ideal marriage.

7. *Arranged*. Marriages were arranged by the parents or sometimes by family representatives.

All of the above was *descriptive*, but it was *not* how God prescribed the family should be. The description is of Jewish culture as it developed after sin came into human experience.

New Testament Times

In New Testament times, the Jewish cultural patriarchal patterns still existed. Divorce was permitted and remarriage was expected in both Jewish and Greek cultures.

There are suggestions in the New Testament for family relationships indicating the direction in which God is carrying His people. God works with people where they are and moves them along to where He wants them to be. There is no God-given or prescribed cultural structure revealed in the Bible, but the Bible is clear on God's intention for an ideal family relationship.

Paul declared the equality of men and women in redemption (Galatians 3:23-29) and also understood the freedom we have in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). He noted that Jesus did not change God's original intention for the family. He began with his hearers' understanding of the traditional marriage.

The new ideal presented by Paul in the Ephesian passage was that Christian marriage was similar to the relationship between Christ and the church characterized by:

1. Mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. "... subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). This concept applies to all family members.

The early Christians had a new kind of dignity and responsibility to each other. In this light and in terms of the root meaning of the word used, translated "submit," Ephesians 5:21 could read:

- "Honor Christ by yielding in love to each other"
- "Honor Christ by cooperating intelligently with each other"
- "Honor Christ by having an orderly arrangement with each other"
- "Honor Christ by reaching consensus with each other"
- "Honor Christ by being open to and trusting each other."

2. Husband-Wife relationships.

a) Wives should be responsive to the husband's leadership. "Wives ... to your own husbands as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22).

b) Responsiveness to leadership requires mutual submission. "For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, himself the saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

c) When the relationship is as above described, the wife does not fear being open to and trusting her husband in everything.

d) Husbands—love, not control.

(1) Self-sacrificing. "... love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

(2) Cleansing kind of love. The husband is to be an example in holiness. There's a sense in which self-giving, affirming love challenges other family members to purify or keep spiritually clean their relationships (Ephesians 5:26-27).

(3) Cherishing love—caring as for his own body—a nourishing, building-up kind of love.

(4) Committed love. Each marriage is a unique union demanding commitment (Ephesians 5:31).

"The manipulative pattern of The Total Woman not only violates personhood . . . but is contrary to the Bible teachings about the use of our sexuality. Sexual experience in marriage is to be pleasurable, but when it is used to achieve power over another, it is wrong."

e) Mutual submission means mutual respect and trust. Through the Ephesian passage one feels the nature of the reciprocal relationship between husband and wife. One does not love and the other submit. Both love, trust and respect.

f) Sexual union in marriage requires mutual submission. "Let the husband render unto the wife her due; and likewise also the wife unto her husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife" (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).

The Emerging Pattern

Much of the Jewish tradition is yet with us. Some relationships are still hierarchially structured. The legal descent is through the male line. The male is considered the head.

Today, in our culture, there is *emerging* a pattern from the New Testament ideal that may be described by such phrases as interpersonal relationship, mutual affection, mutual trust, mutual respect, companionship, friendship. As the David Maces say: "Marriage in the past was held together by external coercion. Today it can be held together only by internal cohesion."²

To summarize these New Testament principles for models of marriage relationships:

1. The relationship must be arrived at by consensus. We usually begin by mutually deciding to marry.

2. It must not destroy the personhood of either. As one man said, "I love my wife too much to make her a second class citizen, and that would not make me look good either."

3. One does not manipulate or blackmail by use of power, sex, money or some supposed authority.

4. The marriage partners, if Christians, must consider the Lordship of Christ. He is the Head, the Leader!

5. The skill in Christian marriage lies in communication and negotiation in mutual love.

Difficulties With Some Proposed Patterns

Some professing Christian people are very afraid of the freedom they have in Christ. They want someone to care for them in such manner as to take that burden from themselves in decision making, choices, finances, et al. These often find the dominant-submissive pattern comfortable. If you are among them, OK, but don't insist on it as being what is prescribed by the Bible.

The dominant-submissive pattern advocated by some . . . usually, if not always, violates personhood. Granted, if one brings to the marriage the neurotic need to be submissive or to control, then this pattern may meet that need.

The manipulative pattern of *The Total Woman* not only violates personhood (makes the other a thing to be used) but is contrary to the Bible teachings about the use of our sexuality. Sexual experience in marriage is to be pleasurable, but when it is used to achieve power over another, it is wrong.

The chain of command pattern as suggested by the Gotbard seminars is a false teaching from a Baptist doctrinal viewpoint in that:

1. It violates the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer or the competency of the soul before God and the availability of access to God by the believer. This is one Baptist distinctive. We can read the Bible for ourselves and pray for ourselves. Our approach to God is not through another person except through Jesus Christ. We are competent to choose. God made us that way.

2. It violates the biblical teaching, "We must obey God rather than men."

3. It violates the biblical teaching that each one of us must be personally responsible to God.

4. It violates the biblical teaching that God respects all persons.

In entering marriage, most couples simply perpetuate the cultural roles with which they are familiar. Many marriages are breaking up on the rocks of domination-submission patterns. One cannot become a zero without loss of self-esteem and consequent resentment. Hostility thus generated either turns inward as depression or outward in a volcanic explosion; and either may lead to divorce.

Conclusion

This presentation is a plea that more couples will study and accept the New Testament pattern and work at making their marriage the loving, cooperative, mutually enriching, mutually edifying, mutually satisfying relationship God intends for it to be. For surely God desires that we have enough heaven in our homes here to get us a little bit prepared for what heaven is going to be like. Let us honor Christ as head of the Christian family by yielding in love to each other (Ephesians 5:21).

¹ Patai, Hanz Rafael, *Sex and Family in the Bible and in the Near East*. Doubleday, 1959.

² See Maces, *We Can Have Better Marriages If We Want Them*. Abingdon Press, 1974.

Hensley is executive director of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. This article is a major excerpt from a pamphlet by the same title.



Can the Church Help?

Violence in the Family

By Bill Blackburn

In recent years as the media have focused attention on child abuse, spouse beating, and now intra-marriage rape, the general public is becoming increasingly aware of widespread violence within families. The "unspeakable acts" of family violence now make headlines and the local evening news. Family violence is, so to speak, out of the closet and into the living room.

Family Violence Not New

Because of the recent attention the media has given family violence, it is deceptively easy to think that this is a recent phenomenon, a product of the times. Records indicate, however, that since colonial times family violence has been a part of the American scene. Mary Wharton was excommunicated from First Church of Boston "for reviling of her husband and sticking of him and other vile and wicked courses." A colonial law adopted in 1646 allowed the death penalty for any child over sixteen "who cursed, smited and would not obey his natural mother or father." In 1874, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded as a response to the public reaction to the story of Mary Ellen, a nine-year-old rescued from her abusive parents. By 1885 in Pennsylvania, the expense of housing prisoners convicted of wife beating had become so great that the state legislature suggested public whippings as an alternative punishment. These and countless other examples indicate that family violence has a long history in the United States.¹

Intra-family violence is no new phenomenon, but it may have been on the increase in recent years. As in so many areas, it is somewhat difficult to be precise as to the increase, decrease, or frequency of this phenomenon. But there are now enough statistics to give us a fairly accurate image of what is taking place.

Child Abuse

Child abuse is the form of family violence that has received the most attention in recent years and evokes the most intense emotional response. According to several recent studies, over 2,000 children in the United States are killed by their parents each year. The majority of these children are infants and toddlers. There are various estimates as to the number of incidents of child abuse each year, but in a recent year there were nearly one quarter of a million confirmable cases. These estimates are in regard to children who are victims of physical violence, but there are even greater numbers of children who are victims of sexual abuse and "passive" violence—neglect. Although incest, for example, is one of our society's forbidden subjects, it is far more common than perhaps most would care to admit. In regard to neglect, with increasing inflation and consequently more families with both parents working

outside the home and with the increase in single parent families, there has been a significant rise in young children spending much of their day unsupervised by adults or in the care of other children. This is not to say, however, that neglect of children is confined to these parts of the population. It is an observable phenomenon in all stratas of society.

Sibling Violence

Another form of violence within the family is sibling violence. Since Cain slew Abel, sibling violence has been a problem plaguing the family of man. Extrapolating from a national study by Strauss, Gelles, and Steinmetz, it is estimated that in one year 138,000 children between three and seventeen used a knife or gun on a sibling.² Another survey found that in fourteen percent of the child abuse cases examined, a sibling was involved in the abuse.³ There are no reliable statistics for sibling homicide in the United States, but in studies done in New York City and Philadelphia about three percent of all homicides were sibling homicides.

Battered Spouses

Spouse beating is another form of family violence that has become a part of America's consciousness in the last several years. Again, there is no reason to assume this is a completely new phenomenon. Although it was previously seldom discussed openly, as public attention has been focused on the problem, increasing numbers of people have felt the freedom to speak out about their victimization by a mate. Using several recent surveys, it can be estimated that of the total married population of 47 million couples, 3.3 million wives and over a quarter million husbands experience severe beatings from their spouse.⁴ Since these surveys included only couples presently living together, the actual number of battered spouses is probably much larger. Based on reports from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, more than fifteen percent of all homicides in 1975 were between husband and wife.

Church Response

Given these kinds of statistics, it is natural to ask, "Why does this happen?" and "What can the church do about it?"

To the first question, there seem to be as many reasons given as there are experts who have studied the subject. Factors leading to family violence include mental illness, social class, alcohol abuse, sex differences, job status, premature birth of a child, and children with handicaps. But whatever the causes, all studies indicate that once family violence is initiated, the chances of it re-occurring are very high. There seems to be a cycle of family violence that once begun may continue for generations.

As to the second question, "What can the church do about family violence?" fortunately there is much the church can do. First, it can seek to understand more than condemn. The classic case of the need to love the sinner but hate the sin is the child abuser or the spouse beater. However repulsive these acts are to us, the offender needs understanding and help and will probably not respond positively to condemnation. Second, the church can provide community-wide programs of family life education. This is more a preventive step than a remedial step, but education provided in an accepting, warm setting where questions are encouraged and people can build friendships can be one of the best measures to head off potential family violence.

In regard to family life education, classes for parents can be especially useful in correcting distorted views of parenting and mistaken expectations of child behavior. One of the most frequent responses of abusive parents is that they were "just trying to get him/her to submit to my will." This is often with the expectation that only as the child "submits" to the parent will he/she submit to God. Also, many abusive parents are found to be punishing their children for things the child developmentally cannot do. A two-year-old is expected to behave like a six-year-old. Helping potential and new parents understand child development can help alleviate much misunderstanding and potential abuse.

Third, churches must recognize that church members are not immune to family violence. Among the victims and perpetrators of family violence are some of our fellow churchgoers. The church needs to speak openly and redemptively about this subject. Also, it needs to report to the proper authorities any suspected child abuse it becomes aware of through the education, mission, or outreach ministries of the church.

A fourth thing the church can do to avert child abuse especially is to provide mother's day out and mother's evening out programs. Numerous studies show that two of the biggest factors in child abuse are fatigue and isolation on the part of the parent. Time away from the child is important for any parent. The success of these church programs for parents is dependent on the leaders communicating concern and openness to the parents.

Still another step the church can take is to survey the community resources for dealing with family violence. What kind of reporting system is involved? How quickly are reports responded to? How extensive are the social services provided for these families? Is there a Parent's Anonymous group in your area for parents who are trying to break out of the cycle of child abuse? After the survey, your church may find it can assist by encouraging its members to consider becoming foster parents for abused children or to provide intermediate care homes for abused spouses. First Baptist Church in

Arlington, Texas, for example, recently joined with a community agency to open a house for battered wives.

A sixth response to the phenomenon of family violence may be a careful study of the local and state laws dealing with family violence. Are police allowed to arrest individuals who try to harm members of their own family? Are they allowed to arrest those who try to enter their own homes after the courts have ordered them to stay away? How long and involved is the process to obtain a restraining order? These and other legal questions need to be answered and then a lobbying effort made by church members to strengthen existing laws and to get passed other laws dealing with family violence.

Finally, the church needs to be the kind of community that lets people know it is a collection of saved sinners who can accept and help all people and all families. Too often the church has adopted the success image of our society that says only the whole, the clean, and the proper can be accepted in these quarters. If the church can communicate instead the grace-love of God so that families of all shapes, sizes, colors, classes, and conditions know that help is available within the gathered people of God, then the church can be a place of peace in the midst of a violent and troubled world.

Conclusion

Family violence has been a part of mankind's story since that story's first recording. This form of violence will continue to be a part of the human scene. The chances of eradicating family violence are about as good as the chances of eradicating sin. Does that mean we must adopt a laissez-faire attitude about family violence? Hardly. We can, should, and must redouble our efforts to see that the ideals and injunctions of the Prince of Peace are applied to a quest for peace at all levels of society—from the international to the family. We may find that as violence within the family is lessened, so is violence between nations. War between nations is really family war written large.

¹ The instances noted are from Suzanne K. Steinmetz's "Violence between Family Members," *Marriage and Family Review*, May/June, 1978, pp. 1-3.

² Strauss, M. A., Gelles, R. J., and Steinmetz, S. K. Press release. Annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Denver, February, 1977.

³ Weston, J. T. A. in Helfer and Kempe (eds.) *The Battered Child* (2nd ed.), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974.

⁴ Steinmetz, "Violence between Family Members," p. 3.

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Have you read....?

By Glen H. Stassen

The Southern Baptist Convention in 1978 passed a strong resolution calling on us to respond more appropriately to Jesus' call to be peacemakers, and to support mutual arms control agreements that slow down both the Russians and Americans in their irrational piling up of nuclear weapons over their and our heads.

Sojourners magazine has produced a packet on the nuclear arms race and Christian conscience. It is \$1.50 from *Sojourners*, 1029 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

In dealing with the nuclear arms race and Christian conscience, I am also finding other books helpful for further reading and additional perspectives. *To Avoid Catastrophe*, edited by Michael Hamilton (Eerdmans, 1977) is readable and informative. *Ethics and Nuclear Strategy* by Francis Winters and Harold Ford (Orbis, 1979) is more technical and very solid. *Facing Up to Nuclear Power: Risks and Potentialities of the Large-Scale Use of Nuclear Energy*, edited by John Francis and Paul Abrecht (Westminster, 1977) handles the nuclear power question with care, examining it from several different angles, and relishing its energy potential more than *Sojourners* does. All the above readings include Christian assessments of the issues involved. In addition, *Scientific American* and *The Bulletin for Atomic Scientists* have been running some excellent essays on these issues.

Keeping up with important new publications in Christian-ethics is not easy. There is no one source of information that does it all. *The Review and Expositor* and *The Journal of Church and State* have helpful book review sections. *The Religious Studies Review* is aimed at an academic rather than church audience. It has nothing but book reviews and is therefore a major source of information. *The Journal of Current Social Issues* focuses on one issue in each publication, and offers extensive suggestions for further reading each time. I also subscribe to the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* and to the *New York Review of Books*. They are loaded with wide-ranging views, and they broaden my narrow perspective.

Stassen is associate professor of Christian ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

By Glenn Saul

There are several good books in the field of Christian ethics now. Let me suggest two that have been helpful to me recently.

The Passion for Life: A Messianic Lifestyle, Jurgen Moltman. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). Moltman has written this book from the perspective of a participant in the community of faith. It is a simple but profound statement about what kind of existence ought to characterize the life of the congregation. *The Passion for Life* sounds a clear reminder that if the vitality of congregational life is diminished, the church's witness to the world is ineffective.

Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics, Stanley Hauerwas. (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975). This book's thesis is that Christian ethics is understood as an ethics of character. Hauerwas helps move the discussion of ethics from the recent emphasis on decision making to the importance of the moral formation of the self. It is not an easy book to read, but perseverance is rewarded. Particularly helpful is the discussion about sanctification and the ethics of character.

As far as my reading program to stay abreast of ethical issues is concerned, there are three guidelines that I use: (1) I try to balance my reading between books which cover ethical methodology, theory, or philosophy with those that are oriented toward particular ethical issues. (2) Concerning particular ethical issues, I try to read books and articles that are written from a variety of theological viewpoints. Seeing an issue from several sides helps me to formulate my own thinking. (3) Finally, I try not only to keep up with recent books in the field of ethics, but I also read or reread some of the classical older works. It is good to be reminded that "new" may not be new after all.

Saul is assistant professor of Christian ethics at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California.

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undergirding social policy, and family-supporting social affirmation of the things that help families together with social rejection of the things that blatantly hurt families.

Both the church and the state are obliged to deal with such family concerns as divorce, absentee parents, aid for dependent children, child abuse, the destroying effects of alcohol, and aging. As Christians, however, we cannot and we do not propose pat, glib answers for these extraordinarily knotty problems. We Christians do seek to uphold values, cherish ideals, foster support systems, and provide directions that will help families. To that end the Christian Life Commission pledges our continued commitment to provide help for families.



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