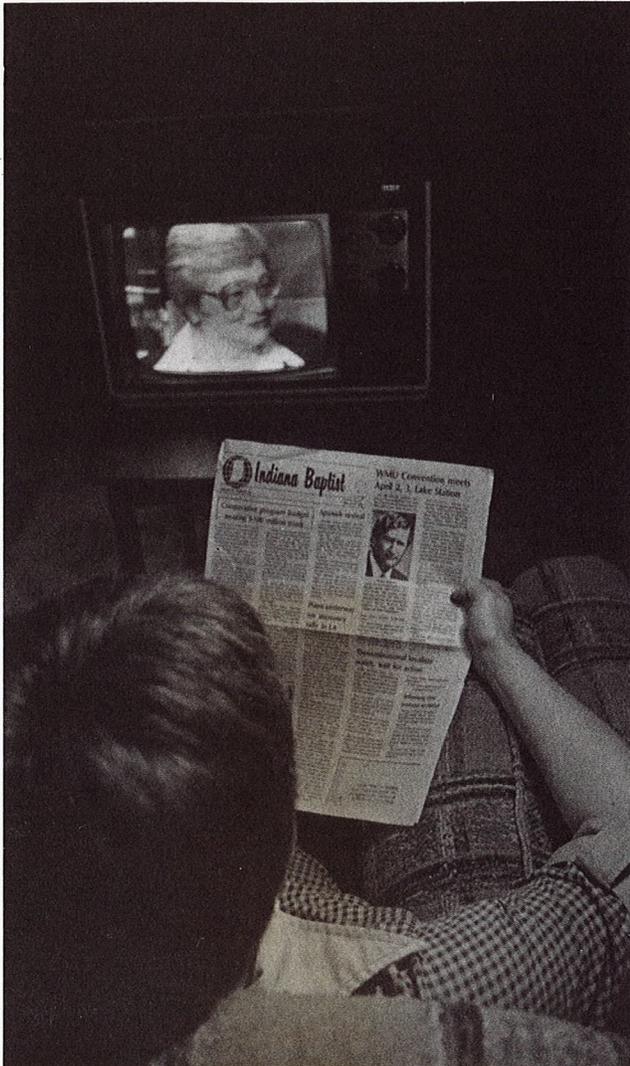


LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

April-May 1981

Ethical Principles For A Communications Age



Inside LIGHT

The *New York Times* advertises itself as the paper that has "All the news that's fit to print." That sounds like a value judgment—and it is. *How* is it made? W. C. Fields, Director of *Baptist Press*, gives some major ethical guidelines for journalists—secular and religious—which help answer that question. His candid remarks provide unique insight into the struggles of printed media journalists.

Is television a shaper or reflector of our culture? Or both? In other words, what is television doing to us, and what are we doing with it? These kinds of questions may not bother you, but they should. Raymond E. Higgins, II of the Christian Life Commission staff reflects on these points in "Television: A Powerful Tool."—WMT

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What About the Jews?

The Jews are in the news.

I have not talked with the Southern Baptist Convention President about his widely reported remarks to the effect that God does not hear the prayers of a Jew.

I think, however, that I understand what he was driving at. As there was an inevitably offensive element of exclusivism in the revealed religion of Judaism, particularly reflected in the first two of the Ten Commandments, so there is an inevitably offensive element of exclusivism in the Christian gospel which is scandalous to non-Christians in general and to Jews in particular.

Our relationships are therefore a bit shaky at best and at worst could deteriorate to our mutual hurt.

Jews and Christians today have much in common. Their understanding of "Bereshith Elohim" from Genesis 1:1 is our understanding of "In the beginning God." Their father Abraham is our spiritual father Abraham; and Abraham's grasp of Adonai Elohim's revelation that the just shall live by faith is our understanding of that profoundly important revelation. Their Shema, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one," is our perception of radical monotheism. Their perception of the unity and holiness of God is our perception of the integrity and ethical uprightness of the Lord. Their commitment to bear witness to

the Lord God and to do his will is our commitment. Their wilderness wanderings and pogroms are our martyrdoms and cruel persecutions. Their moral values are our moral values. Their concern for integrity in family life is our concern. Their discipline of theological ethics is our discipline of theological ethics. Their chosenness is our sense of election. And their great and many-faceted *shalom* is our peace that passes all understanding.

Yet Jews and Christians have undeniably deep differences. What are they?

Their scriptures are ours, but all of ours are not theirs. Their focus is on David, but ours is on David's Son. Their concern (more passive and culturally conditioned in America today than at some times in their history) is to live and let live without proselyting; but ours is to evangelize. Their preoccupation is with truth, but ours is with grace. Their understanding of salvation for Israel and for their Promised Land is not our understanding of salvation personally experienced and then shared through the church. Their general understanding of the messiah concept is not our understanding that Jesus Christ is Lord. Their current view of an age of human fulfillment ushered in through the processes of history and human development is not our view of the person, Jesus Christ, whose life and death and res-

urrection constitute the central core of our faith.

Yes, Christians and Jews are different. These differences are really not resolvable. Neither group expects the other to compromise their deepest distinctives. The way to reasonable *shalom* in our relationship is not to ignore these differences but to understand and clarify them wherever possible.

Jews should be able to expect at least the following important things from Christians.

1. We will personally seek to shun prejudice and avoid the stereotyping which scars little children, offends the sensitive, and hurts people for whom Christ died.

2. We will not live tolerantly with anti-Semitism in any shape, form, or fashion.

3. We will work responsibly in our communities and in society at large to love God with our whole hearts and to love our neighbors, including our Jewish neighbors, as we love ourselves.

4. We will seek to continue to bear our Christian witness without compromise or timidity, compelled by the conviction that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

Joy Valentine

LIGHT, a bimonthly bulletin for pastors, state and national denominational workers, and other persons who have a special interest in applied Christianity, is published by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tenn. 37219.

Foy Valentine, Executive Director
William M. Tillman, Jr., Editor
Tim Fields, Production Editor

Phil Strickland Named to Head Texas CLC

Phil Strickland, who has been involved in Texas and national public concerns, was elected March 2 as director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Strickland, 39, who has been with the social concerns agency since 1967 as associate for public affairs and citizenship information with the Texas CLC, was elected during a meeting of the 192-member executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Strickland, a native of Abilene, has been interim director of the Commission since James M. Dunn resigned in December to become director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Widely known for his work as legislative liaison for the Commission, Strickland relates Commission positions on issues to state and local officials and the public media.

Freedom With Responsibility:

The Challenge to Southern Baptist Communicators

Editors Note: The following interview with Wilmer C. Fields, director of public relations and director of Baptist Press for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, was conducted by LIGHT editor Bill Tillman.

LIGHT This is a communication age. Are Baptists keeping up?

Fields No.

LIGHT Why not?

Fields There are now 13.6 million Southern Baptists in 35,000 churches in 50 states. We have an enormous task communicating among ourselves. Effective communication with the remainder of the world is increasingly more difficult. Competition for the world's attention is rising fast. We need additional people who are well-trained. We must update our equipment and procedures. This requires more financial resources. Basically we need a major escalation of our commitment to a free flow of information and to persuasive communication as part and parcel of Baptist witness and outreach.

LIGHT Are other religious groups doing better than Southern Baptists in this regard?

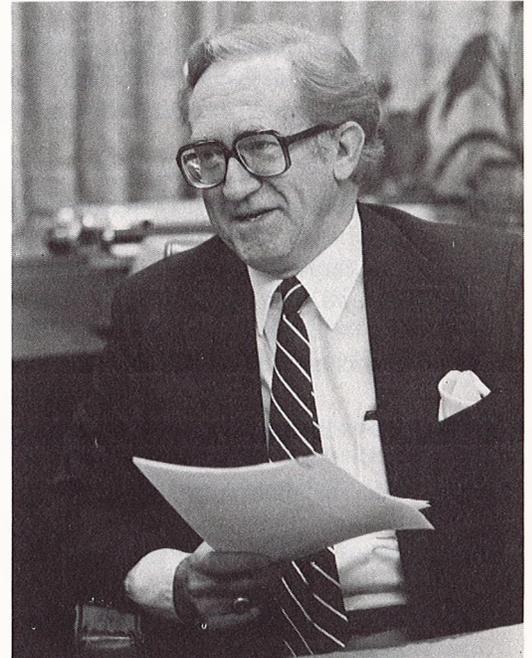
Fields Some are, yes. At least in some respects! Others are trailing us. No religious group that I know about is satisfied with its communications efforts.

LIGHT Where are our Baptist strengths in communicating to a new decade?

Fields The print media!

LIGHT Why is that?

Fields Among 230 or so religious bodies in America, Southern Baptists have a major commitment



W. C. Fields

to print as a priority in communication. The Radio and Television Commission is working hard to grasp the handles of the electronic media. And they are making progress. But we have a lot of catching up to do in these expensive media.

The printed page, however, is an effective medium that is familiar, generally cost-effective, reasonably attractive, and usually done with a measure of skill.

LIGHT Apparently then journalism is an important skill for the Christian movement.

Fields Definitely. It always has been. Matthew, Mark and Luke were in a sense news reporters. John was an editorial writer. There is still an affinity between journalism or news handling and the Good News. This is true today in both the print media and the electronic media.

LIGHT Is religion in the secular news media increasing or decreasing in volume?

Fields Both, depending on the locality. Religion is having to compete more vigorously for space and time in the secular mass media. But when there is action—not just talk, but action—religion can quickly become newsworthy.

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LIGHT **With all that is going on in the churches you would think that the secular news media would report religion a lot more than they do.**

Fields Yes. But you have to keep in mind that much of what the churches do is not new. Their programs and activities are important, inspiring and uplifting, but usually not all that different from the developments in many other churches. News deals with that which is new!

LIGHT **Does journalism have ethical standards?**

Fields Yes, definitely.

LIGHT **What are some of them?**

Fields Truth. Objectivity. Fairness. Balance. Opinion that is recognizable as such. Freedom with responsibility. Justice. A multitude of ethical issues arise from these major concerns.

States and abroad, daily newspapers, national magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*, plus the news departments of radio and television stations and the networks.

LIGHT **Does Baptist Press specialize?**

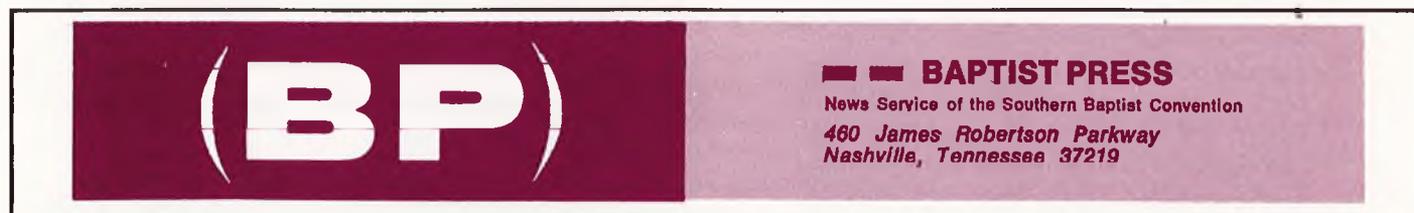
Fields Yes. In SBC news! We try to provide authoritative, dependable news and features about Southern Baptists' work and life.

Baptist Press is the major source of the out-of-state news for the Baptist state papers. It is likewise a major source of news about Southern Baptists for secular news media.

LIGHT **Can a denominational news service be truly free to report what is really happening?**

Fields Yes, if Baptist people, for instance, demand freedom for their own media. In a democratic society like the Baptist Movement, the information and enlightenment of each individual church member is important to the progress of the entire body.

LIGHT **Why have independent publications sprung up in Baptist life?**



LIGHT **Why don't daily newspapers, television and radio news people and others live up to these standards?**

Fields They try, but perfection is difficult to achieve in journalism as it is anywhere else. We all have difficulty doing what we "ought" to do.

LIGHT **What is Baptist Press?**

Fields *Baptist Press* is the news service of the Southern Baptist Convention. It has been operating since the mid-Forties.

LIGHT **Is it like a wire service?**

Fields Yes, like Associated Press and United Press International.

LIGHT **What news outlets does it serve?**

Fields *Baptist Press* serves the 34 Baptist state papers, other religious publications in the United

Fields Partly because someone feels that his views are not adequately represented or that Baptist Press and the Baptist state papers are not telling "the full story," so he starts a publication of his own.

LIGHT **Are they justified in that judgment?**

Fields Not on the basis of the attitude and the attempt of the official Baptist media to shoot squarely with Baptist people! Baptist Press and the state papers try to help Baptist people stay informed and up-to-date reporting newsworthy developments—both the favorable and the unfavorable.

We think straightforward honesty is not just the best policy with everyone. It is the only policy.

LIGHT **Baptist Press and the state papers have been criticized by dissidents in the denomination of one-sidedness. Are you?**

Fields We try to report the news in a factual, fair and

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balanced manner. It is difficult to do that to the full satisfaction of all partisans in a controversy. But we continue to try! The reactions of these partisans help to keep us on our toes, always trying to improve our batting average.

LIGHT Can there be too much negativism in the news, including Baptist news?

Fields Definitely. A controversy can persist so long and the news stories about it continue to the point that the readers and listeners, the consumers of news, lose their perspective. News should be factual. It should also be balanced and not distorted.

LIGHT People have been known to accuse Baptist Press and the state papers of being too much like the secular press. Are you?

Fields Good journalism is a worthy and necessary endeavor wherever it is found in society. Not all daily newspapers live up to those high ideals. Baptist journalism serves the Baptist cause best when it lives up to the most stringent professional journalism requirements and

measures up to the highest ethical and moral demands of the profession.

Baptist medicine, for instance, must first be professionally competent medicine. Baptist teaching, also, must be based on sound teaching philosophy in any setting. Likewise, there is no room these days for slovenly, slipshod journalism in the most important of all causes, the cause of Christ. Baptist journalism ought to be journalism at its best!

LIGHT Can a Baptist journalist or communicator be a prophet these days?

Fields Yes. But that role is, and never has been, an easy one. Fortunately, we have had and do have many in Baptist journalism who care deeply about doing what they conceive to be God's will.

LIGHT Will the Baptist state papers continue to be important in SBC life?

Fields Yes, indefinitely! We should count our blessings. No denomination, with the possible exception of the Roman Catholic church, has in place in this country such a complete and healthy system of communication as Southern Baptists have in the 34 state papers. These papers have a circulation of 1.8 million and that is a powerful influence for good in SBC life. I see that influence increasing, not diminishing, in the Eighties.

LIGHT How can the state papers be improved?

Fields Each of the papers operates on a shoe-string, when you compare the cost per single copy. Baptists need to accept gladly higher subscription rates for their papers to allow adequate financing for better equipment and additional personnel. Philosophically, the state papers, in my opinion, can improve considerably by becoming more oriented to the laity.

LIGHT You are the SBC Press Representative. How do you relate to the secular press?

Fields Our staff at the Executive Committee tries to advance the cause of Christ by helping the mass media know and understand Southern Baptists—who we are, what we are doing, and why. It is a never-ending process. But we try to be as honest and straightforward with secular media as we are with our own people. We think truthfulness and reliability are essential to achieving three important goals inside the denomination and outside: (1) understanding, (2) acceptance, and (3) support.

Television:

by Raymond E. Higgins II

"Television is the most powerful tool of mass communications in the history of mankind," said Bob Hope in concluding his special program recently.

In *Your God Is Alive and Well and Appearing in Popular Culture*, John Wiley Nelson has written: "We don't just watch TV, we worship there—same time, same station, week after week, at the altar of our own cultural values."

There are several reasons why Bob Hope and John Nelson are correct in their belief that television is a powerful tool. For one thing, television is a very accessible object. Ninety-eight percent of American households own a working set, and almost fifty percent have more than one set. There is hardly a place one can go to get away from television.

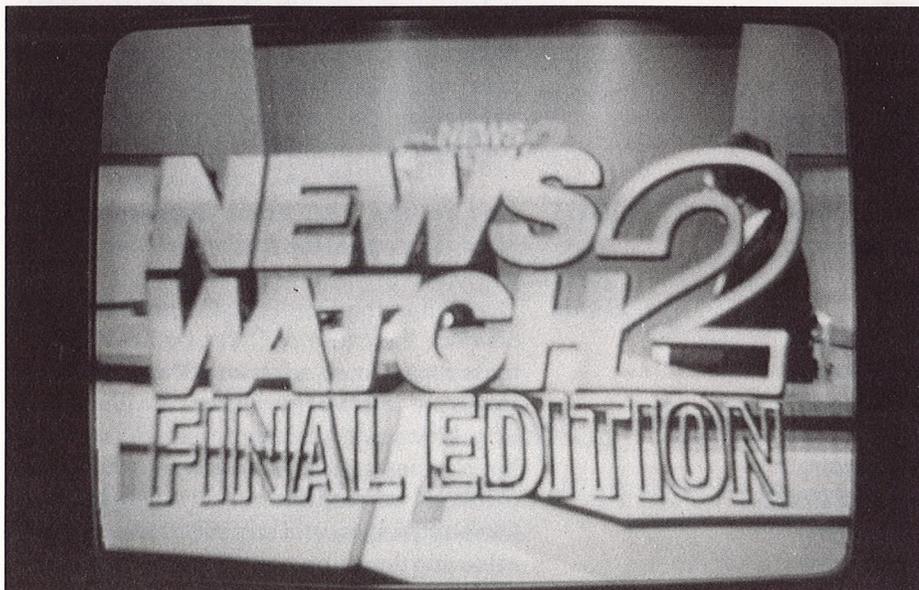
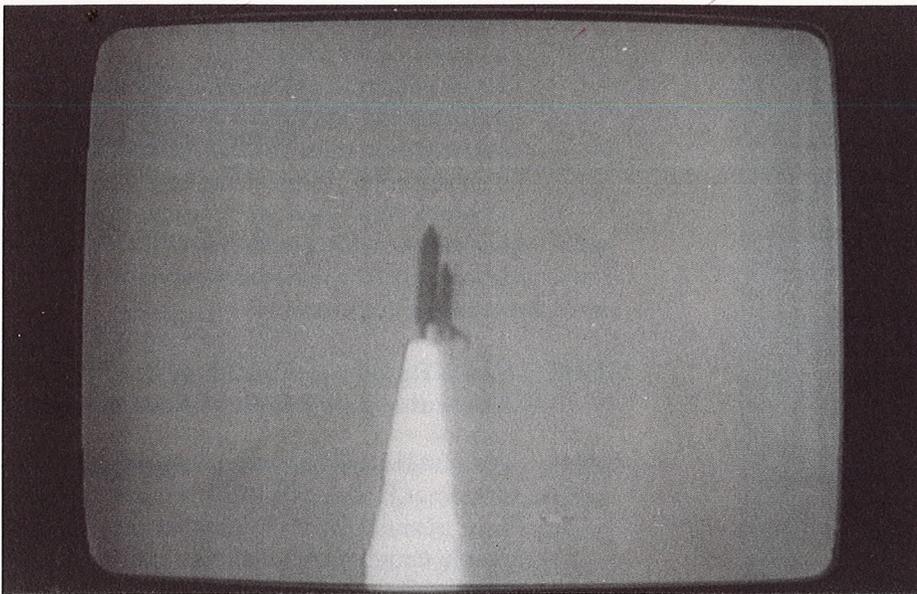
Television is also a powerful tool because of the amount of time that people devote to it. The Television Bureau of Advertising reports that American families are watching the tube a record seven hours and twenty-two minutes a day. Nightly television audiences average about sixty million.

One estimate is that by the age of eighteen, an American child born today will have spent more waking hours watching television than doing anything else, including going to school. Five and six-year-old children watch television an average of four hours per day. Television viewing is what Americans do more than anything else but sleep.

Television is powerful also because of the value people place upon it. More persons own a television set than a refrigerator or indoor toilet. Television, for many persons, serves as their main source of information and values about the world.

Finally, television is a powerful tool because people depend upon it as their major source of entertainment. At one point in time, people created their own entertainment. In today's home, entertainment is ready-made, packaged, and piped directly into the home. One does not even have to get up from the easy chair to start the continuous entertain-

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WNGE TV-2 Nashville, Tennessee "Final Edition News"

A Powerful Communications Tool



CBS Television's "Peter and Paul"

ment rolling; it can happen by remote control.

The role of television in our society is not that of being just a friend or just a foe. It is both friend and foe. It is a friend when its power is used constructively. When its power is implemented in dangerous and destructive ways, it is a foe.

Television: A Constructive Tool

Television's power can be used in several ways for constructive purposes. For one thing, it is an educational tool. It provides enlightening and informative programs for adults and children. There are documentaries, news specials, and magazine format shows which offer a wealth of material to be learned and evaluated. Some comedies, dramas, and talk shows are educational. Many of these programs offer information about the world that could not be discovered and learned any other way.

Television is constructive when it informs the public about national and world events. Never in the history of man has communications to mass audiences

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been so swift and dependable. We know, with hardly any delay, much that is going on anywhere in the world. Because of this, we are better able to assess our current situation and forecast future directions.

Television is constructive when it displays the pluralism of our country and world. Television does us a great service when it brings to our attention the kaleidoscope of cultures. A world view perspective is necessary during times in which groups and nations are tempted toward parochialism, exclusivism, and moral arrogance.

Television is constructive when it entertains in a responsible way. Humans need a way to relax and a time for enjoyment and laughter. Aesthetic needs of individuals can be met through the medium of television. Families can experience great moments of unity and fulfillment when television programs entertain and inspire.

Television: A Destructive Tool

Though television is a useful tool, it can also be used destructively.

Television can be a one-eyed god. As

John Wiley Nelson has declared, it is worshipped by millions daily. For many, it has become their primary source of information about the world, reality and values.

George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania says that religion alone has matched TV as a cultural force that transmitted identical messages to every group and class. "Television is best seen and studied as a ritual, as a virtually universal new religion that tends to absorb viewers of otherwise diverse outlooks into its own 'mainstream.'" It has 6.5 hours per day in every home to present a "synthetic but coherent world of fact and fiction. . . that people experience non-selectively." The more time people spent watching TV, the more Gerbner's team found TV providing them with their main view of reality: 'Mainstreaming' they call it.

Television is destructive when it exploits sex. Part of this exploitation comes by means of misinformation about sex. Television suggests and models sexual relationships as pleasure without commitment, intimacy without love, and self-gratification without sharing.

Another illustration of exploitation is the use of manipulation. At NBC in 1978, programming head Paul Klein reported that the network had decided to concentrate its courtship on women between the ages of 18 and 49, a highly prized target for advertisers. For bait, NBC wanted to use sex themes because they "attract more female viewers than male viewers."

Television is destructive when it uses violence as entertainment. Southern Baptist media ethicist Harry Hollis writes: "Regularly we are exposed to shows where human beings are wounded, raped, whipped, punched, knifed, hanged, kicked, sliced, jabbed, shot, maimed, and murdered—all in the name of entertainment."

If one wishes to see 54 acts of violence, one can watch all of the plays of Shakespeare, or watch three evenings of prime-time television.

This constant barrage of violence is not harmless. Some psychologists be-

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lieve that television violence causes viewers to behave more aggressively through these combined influences: (1) changes in attitude toward aggression; (2) lowered sensitivity to violence; and (3) observational learning.

Television is destructive when it idolizes morally inept family models. Viewers need to be aware of attempts to present irresponsible parents as "patterns" and the romanticizing of one-parent families. Particular attention should be given to the way television casts and portrays the role of children in the family.

Television is destructive when it suggests the irresponsible use of alcohol. In many programs, the consumption of alcohol livens the party, eases the tension, and facilitates the conversation. Advertisers suggest the irresponsible use of alcohol. Commercials never show the damaging effects that alcohol has on individuals—their work, their mental state, their families. You, the viewer, are always shown a romantic setting in which a drink does wonders for someone's life. Such suggestiveness is, indeed, irresponsible and destructive.

Television is destructive when it bombards the audience with the philosophy that materialism is the "be all" and "end all" of "living." Television espouses materialism by defining success in terms of money and status, by suggesting that luxury is the ultimate paradise, and that the abundant life is one in which you continually better yourself financially. This kind of overemphasis on the material must be scrutinized carefully.

Advertisers can be credited with doing a great job of perpetuating materialism. Advertisers pay over six billion dollars a year for advertisements. In fact, television network employees are paid because they have convinced the advertisers that through television they can affect human behavior and influence people to buy products.

Television is destructive when it equates a television personality's success with expertise in another area of life. A television personality's expertise is the ability to communicate effectively

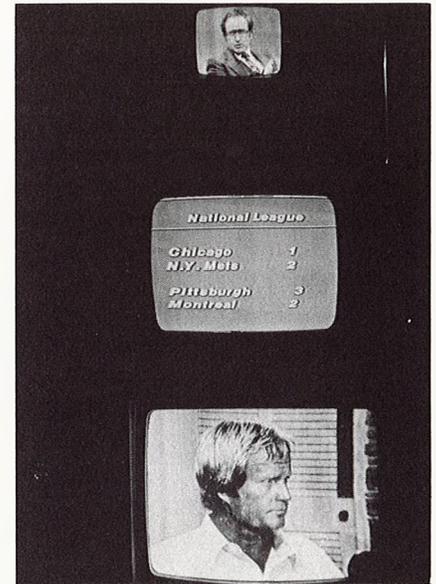
through the medium of television. Being successful on television does not automatically signal expertise in another area of life such as responsible family life, economics, justice, war and peace, and personal morality.

Television is destructive when it presents life simplistically. There is no problem, however serious, whether it falls within the domain of a policeman, private detective, doctor, or lawyer, which cannot be fully resolved in an hour, to the satisfaction of the law, the participants and the viewers. However, relationships in real life are complex. Answers do not come easily. Because television is directed to mass audiences for specific periods of time, the tendency is to make life simplistic and episodic, but we know that real life is not that way. Life cannot be turned on and off at will, or picked up in the middle.

Television is destructive when it stereotypes people. Television stereotypes males and females and their roles. In the world of television, males have occupied between 66% and 75% of all television roles for the past ten years. The nature of the roles given to males and females are quite different. Almost 75% of television female characters are found in comedies or similar shows. More than 50% of the male characters are in crime, western, and action-adventure shows. Within these roles, women are portrayed as "nicer" people. Females are less likely than males to accomplish tasks. Females are very vulnerable on television, far more likely than males to be victims of violence, to be patients in a hospital and less likely to recover (70% of medical interventions are successful with male patients, whereas only 23% are successful with female patients). In dramatic programs, 40% of the male characters are more than 40 years old, whereas only 15% of the females are that old. Marriage is shown as reducing a male's power but enhancing a female's power. Only 1/3 of television males are married compared to 2/3 of television females.

Minorities are under-represented and stereotyped on television. Though blacks are currently represented on television in proportion to the population, non-black minority members are still under-represented. Though we see a fair number of black characters, they are

most likely cast in minor roles. Blacks are portrayed as good and likeable but neither forceful nor powerful. Blacks are still portrayed as less powerful than whites.



Fifty percent of households have more than one TV set.

Viewers Must Exert Their Power

In order to counterbalance television's power, viewers must exert their own kind of power. This can take two forms of response. The first response is *education*. Education whittles away at both television's power to dominate one's life and to indoctrinate one's perspective.

To estimate your power as a viewer over television, answer these questions: (1) how many television sets do you have in your house? (2) where is (are) your television set(s) located in the house? (3) how many hours a day do you watch television? (4) would you rather watch television than get involved in some worthwhile activity? and (5) do you watch programs you really do not want to watch? Your answers to these questions ought to help you determine whether television has power over you, or whether you have power over television.

Being educated about television's power not only involves personal reflection and evaluation, it also involves responsible decision making.

Do not depend upon television to be your *primary* source of information, perspective and values about the world and reality. When the viewer becomes de-

pendent upon television for values, beliefs, and behavior, then the viewer has become an idolater. Television has become that person's one-eyed god. For the Christian, God as revealed in Jesus Christ and mediated to us through the witness of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, the church, and individual Christians, should be our primary reference point and source of our perspective about reality.

Know when to turn it on. Television can be a good instrument for both education and entertainment.

Know when to turn it off. If you do not know when to turn it off, you are a television addict. Its power has mesmerized you and your ability to engage in productive activity. You should know when to turn it off for yourself, and also for your children. Do not use television as a baby-sitter. Know what your children are watching and help them interpret it properly.

A recent survey in California indicates that the more a student watches television, the worse he does in school. Though the results "do not necessarily prove that television watching is a direct cause of lower test scores. . . there are strong statistical relationships."

Watch television *intelligently*. Analyze the content. Discuss the material with family and friends. Bring Christian values to bear upon life as portrayed on television.

Though education is important for establishing and maintaining viewer power, *action* is also necessary. Viewers have the right and should exercise the



responsibility to voice their concerns related to television programs. When networks program violence often enough that they elicit aggressive behavior, even if it is only from those who are predisposed to aggressive behavior, society must ask, "Is this response good? Do we want to encourage this kind of behavior?"

Is there, then, the need for a "clean up television" campaign? Definitely, yes! Because the airwaves belong to the people, the people should take part in determining what they see on television. That responsibility becomes even stronger when it is learned that the television industry does not always have the viewer's interests at heart.

But the distortion of the message is a fault of both the viewer and the networks. The audience should not place all of the blame on the television networks for morally questionable programs. The television audience must be a responsible audience by evaluating the programs it watches, by addressing specific complaints to the networks, and by continu-

ing to work for the best possible television programming.

The brokenness that we see on television should call us to a deeper integration of the power of Christ in the world. For example, our response to violence on television should be the preaching and living for peace, the stressing of the Beatitudes, and the recovery of the discipleship of cross-bearing. Our response to the stereotyping and categorizing and labeling of people should be one of acceptance and love. Because each person is made in the image of God, we must seek to accept them for who they are and for the way they are, which is precisely the way God in Jesus Christ has pursued us.

Where Christians see brokenness in the world, they should be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in them, and be willing and able to minister to the hurts. Television shows that our world is broken. We should be sensitive to that brokenness, and at the same time sensitive to the presence of God, whose will it is that we become both ministers and reconcilers in the midst of that brokenness.

Raymond Higgins is the special project coordinator for correlating social action and social ministries for the Christian Life Commission and the Home Mission Board.



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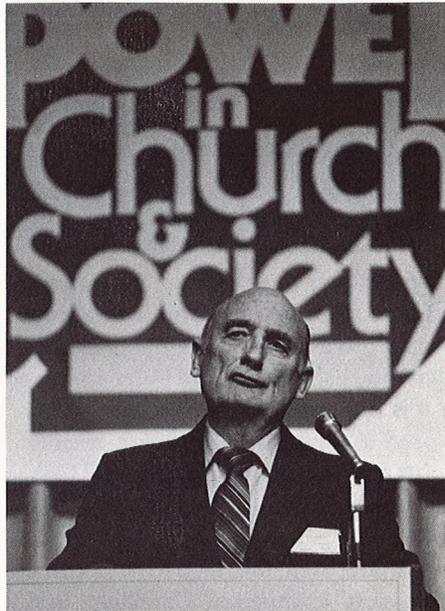
Doing The Truth

by L. D. Johnson

We have inherited a revolution. Having sown the wind, we are reaping the whirlwind. The church may be the one institution with foundations sturdy enough to survive a revolution; it has done so before, conserving the best of the culture's inheritance while becoming the midwife and mentor for the merging age. This can best be done, not by the church adopting the dying world's death dances, but by the church recovering the vision of her nature and mission.

None of that do I wish to modify. Instead, I wish to specify. We have indeed inherited a revolution. Whether historians will say of us as Henry Adams wrote of Louis XVI, that we were not up to the task, remains to be seen. One thing seems sure. We are going to have to do more than meet and talk. One of the sins of the contemporary church is that we have not only preached better than we have performed, but that we have made preaching and teaching and committeeing stand in the place of doing. That has happened so routinely that much of the time we operate out of a context that talking is doing. It isn't. "Much cackle, few eggs." That is a proverb only because it represents a considerable slice of ordinary human behavior. The problem is that in revolution rhetoric without response is both phony and futile. In revolution, you had better put up or shut up.

In the same context in which that timeless summary of the Gospel appears—John 3:16—are found these words of our Lord: "But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God (John 3:21, RSV)." There are 2 kinds of responses to the Light of the world, this passage tells us. One response is to shun the light and scurry like cockroaches into the darkness because the light shows up the shabbiness of your deeds. The other response is to come to the light in order that the light may show that what the doer did was in obedience to God. "He who does the truth comes to the light." Truth, as John understands it, is not a philosophical abstraction to be discussed, mulled over, and defined. It is not a set of propositions offered as ex-



One of the sins of the contemporary church is that we have not only preached better than we have performed, but that we have made preaching and teaching and committeeing stand in the place of doing.

planation of the universe; it is not a doctrine to be embraced. It may be related to all of those, but it is also something to be done. We people in academe are forever talking about the relentless search for truth. Sometimes I suspect that there is not enough effort in the search to make even a mild sweat break out on the scholar's brow. Truth, says John, is what you are doing if you are doing God's work.

As God incarnated his eternal truth in Jesus, so truth must take on tangibility in what the man of God does. How does the church "tangibilize" truth in the crisis of the contemporary world revolution?

To begin with, there needs to be a new disposition in the churches to embrace both sides of the Gospel—redemption and responsibility, faith and works. No older or more common issue has plagued Christendom. We just don't seem to be able to get and keep it together—the indivisible word of profession and practice. We are always connecting these with an "or" instead of an

"and," suggesting that they are alternative Christian lifestyles. The result is always a crippled, one-legged, unconvincing witness.

Sometimes we emphasize evangelism and largely ignore social concern, going after men's souls while letting their lives rot in poverty and despair, meanwhile feeling no conflict in conscience over the enjoyment of our surfeiting abundance.

In the words of George MacLeod of the Iona Community in Scotland, "We have dismembered the Cross. Churchmen carry about the vertical beam, our forgiveness in Christ, and unconsciously escape the turgid demands of its corollary in horizontal obedience. Meanwhile, the world (oh, so moral and well meaning) carries round the horizon-

tal, forever seeking right relations with neighbor man or neighbor nation, trying to get itself straight without the Bible knowledge about man's condition that humbles, and about the Christ that alone can totally exalt. It is precisely the conjunction of the vertical and the horizontal, that, in every sense, makes the Cross. And it is the Cross that alone can save."

The beams of the Cross cannot be separated without destroying its meaning. The issue is not an either/or, calling for a persuasive evangelism or an aggressive program of social action. How could we who profess such deep devotion to "the whole Bible" have allowed faith and works to become strangers to each other in the church?

Have you preached lately from the thundering words of Amos? "Listen, you men who crush the humble, and oppress the poor. Small you make your measures, large your weights. You cheat by tampering with the scales. . . to buy the needy for a pair of shoes, to sell the very refuse of your grain. . . . Woe to the carless citizens. . . lolling on their ivory

LIGHT

divane, sprawling on their couches, dining off fresh lamb and fatted veal, crooning to the music of the lute, lapping wine by the bowlful, and using for ointment the best of the oil—with never a single thought for the bleeding wounds of the nation.”

Or when has this text from Isaiah been wrestled with: “Cease to do evil, learn to do good: Seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow (Is. 1:16e-17, RSV).” If the prophets cannot reach us with the necessity to embrace both beams of the Cross, consider the words of him who by his hanging upon it glorified it forever in our sight: “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Mat. 7:21, RSV).” Or remember the parable of the Last Judgment. The separation is made not upon the basis of confession, baptism, or creed, but whether that horizontal beam of the Cross had been grasped. Were the hungry fed, the thirsty watered, the naked clothed, the sick and imprisoned visited? Or remember his very first sermon text: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18-19).” Sounds like a full-blown program of Christian social action.

If we are to do the truth not only have we to remember that the Gospel is the divine Word of both redemption and responsibility, but we have also to acknowledge that responsibility is both personal and corporate. The necessity for personal moral renewal if this culture is to survive will be denied by few. We have witnessed a fundamental shift in the concept of personal morality and integrity. “Abscam,” a new word in the American vocabulary to go along with “Watergate,” does not really shock us. We take such behavior by elected officials more or less for granted. In our state of South Carolina, the most celebrated of the Abscam congressmen was renominated by his party after his indictment (though he was subsequently narrowly defeated for reelection). Said one friend of mine who lives in that congressional

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district: “People around here said about voting for him, ‘We know he’s a crook, but he’s our crook.’”

Sometimes it appears that the seamier our personal lives become the more exercised we get over large and distant problems. Students get all worked up over the environmental crisis, but every Sunday morning when I come to the campus to prepare for worship I meet maintenance personnel going about picking up the trash and beverage cans thrown down by students the night before. But young people don’t have a corner on the market of inconsistency. How many of us will give generously to send missionaries to Nigeria, while being certain that neither we nor our children get to be close friends and equals with black people in our own town? The old doctor in *The Brothers Karamazov* has our number when he confesses: “I love humanity, but I can’t help being surprised at myself; the more I love humanity in general the less I love men in particular. On the other hand, it invariably happened that the more I hated men individually, the more ardent became my love for humanity at large.”

However, there is another side to Christian morality which our Baptist individualism makes it hard for us to hear. I am not just one person; I am part of a community for which I have appropriate responsibility. Further, these two sets of responsibilities—personal and corporate—are not two separate and distinct areas. They interpenetrate one another, so that the culture impinges upon and invades my living room, gets inside my head, makes me in large measure who I am, as well as I helping to make it what it is. Never was this put plainer than by Reinhold Niebuhr nearly a half century ago in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Many a person who guards his personal rectitude like an angry dog standing over his favorite bone refuses to take any responsibility for the public character of his culture, or acknowledges that either by participation in or abstention from the culture’s

values and priorities he helps to make them. What I am appealing for is the realization that the public good is not just everybody’s business—and therefore nobody’s—but rather the public good and my own private good are two parts of the same thing. Martin Luther King was on target when he said in a sermon that it is not enough to rescue victims on the Jericho Road. We must rid the road of robbers.

So, the Lord calls us to do the truth. We talk enough already. Niebuhr wrote in his *Leaves From The Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, “When I sit through a church conference I begin to see a little more clearly why religion is on the whole so impotent ethically, why the achievements of the church are so meager compared to its moral pretensions. . . . The church conference begins and ends by attempting to arouse an emotion of the ideal, usually in terms of personal loyalty to the person of Jesus, but very little is done to attach the emotion to specific tasks and projects.”

To speak the truth in a world full of punk and acid rock, of angry charges and countercharges, and of bombastic political rhetoric is hard enough. To do the truth in government hall and marketplace, in factory and classroom, at home and in the neighbor’s house, is harder still. But without doing it, all professions of truth and all praise of it will be like the chaff which the winds drives away.

L. D. Johnson is chaplain of Furman University, Greenville, South Carolina. This is one of six theme addresses he presented at the 1981 CLC Seminar in Dallas, Texas. All six are available on two cassette tapes (\$8.00 for the set). They will be included also in the printed seminar proceedings *Power in Church and Society* (\$2.50 each). Cassettes and proceedings are available from the Christian Life Commission 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tennessee 37219.

ON THE ETHICS FRONT

This is the first in a series highlighting state Christian social ethics personnel.

A keen sense of humor and an infectious laugh—that's what gets your attention first about J. Clark Hensley. It does not take long for you to call him friend.

Clark's winsome personality has won a lot of people to the cause of applied Christianity in the Mississippi Baptist Convention. His brilliance as a communicator (both as a writer and a platform speaker) has not hurt, either!

Clark Hensley began serving as Mississippi's first and only Christian Action Commission Executive Director in 1966. No stranger to Mississippi, he first went there to serve as a director of missions in Jackson in 1956. That was after twenty-eight years of pastoral experience in Missouri and Tennessee and a three-year teaching stint at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas.

In the Christian Action Commission, Clark is a resource person and is responsible for education in family life, church and state issues, Christian citizenship, pornography, human relations, alcohol and other drug abuse, and other special moral concerns.

Clark says he enjoys most "the emphasis on the family. I feel this is where



J. Clark Hensley

we can best present most of the other problems as well as build attitudes and motivate action to correct or change existing circumstances. The family is the best change agent in our society."

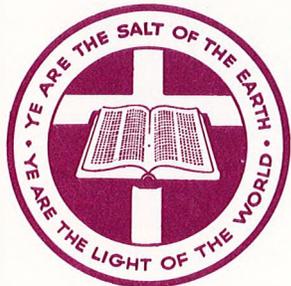
His expertise and philosophy of ministry as a social ethicist have primarily developed through concern, study, and experience dealing with social issues. For Hensley, applied Christianity means that "we must preach and teach all dimensions of our relationships in reference to the gospel. The vertical dimension spells

out our relationship to God through Christ while the horizontal dimension makes clear man's relationship to his fellow man. It takes both to be complete."

Clark's style and emphases reach beyond Mississippi. He is a frequent seminar leader dealing particularly with the issue of divorce. He is often a guest lecturer in colleges and seminaries on the subject of the family or social ethics in general. One does not have to go far to find his contributions to numerous denominational and professional periodicals. *Coping with Being Single Again*, *Preacher Behave—Pointers on Ministerial Ethics*, and *Help for the Family* are the latest among his nine books which include one, *Behaving at Home*, co-authored with Mrs. Hensley.

Clark Hensley has been elected to Who's Who in Religion, Who's Who in International Community Service, and has received the Distinguished Service Award for Leadership in Christian Social Ethics from the Christian Life Commission in 1975. He earned his A.B. degree from William Jewell College and Th.M. and Th.D. degrees from Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Clark and his wife, Margaret, are members of Northminster Baptist Church in Jackson.



Christian Life Commission

Of The Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37219

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