



The Christian Life Commission

of the Southern Baptist Convention

Commission Helps Baptists Apply Gospel

The Christian Life Commission is the moral concerns and social action agency of the 13-million member Southern Baptist Convention. The commission consists of one representative from each of the 26 state Baptist conventions and four at-large members. The entire commission meets annually in Nashville during the month of September.

While the agency never speaks "for" Southern Baptists, it has been given the responsibility for speaking "to" Southern Baptists about moral and social issues. In today's complex world, that assignment becomes more challenging every day.

The official "program statement" for the commission was approved by the SBC in 1961. It states that the agency is "to assist Southern Baptists in the propagation of the gospel by helping them to become more aware of the ethical implications of the Christian gospel."

The principal areas of concern listed in the program statement are family life, human relations, moral issues, economic life and daily work, citizenship, world peace and "related fields. . ."

The chief concern of the commission is described as "the area of Christian social ethics, which is understood to mean the application of Christian principles in everyday living."

Climate for Witness

The program statement also charges the commission to help Southern Baptists "create, with God's leadership and by His grace, the kind of moral and social climate in which the Southern Baptist witness for Christ will be most effective." This challenge, although expressed specifically for the first time in 1961, has been at the heart of the commission's work since it was first funded through the Cooperative Program in 1947.

In fact, the creation of the commission itself followed a long series of attempts to deal with various moral and social concerns.

One of the earliest recorded attempts to cope with a moral issue was a meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1888. A simple temperance resolution was ruled out of order as "not germane to the work of the convention." The convention's early concept of itself as being "purely missionary" in nature (according to an inadequate and unbiblical view of missions) left no room for theological education, stewardship, or expressions of moral concern.

The fact that social problems of industrialization and urbanization were slow to develop in the South also contributed to the delayed expression in the area of social action.

But at the turn of the century, more and more Southern Baptists were recovering the social teachings and the moral demands of the gospel.

Alcohol Early Issue

By 1908, a committee on Civic Righteousness reported to the convention a broad, radical call to social action. The convention adopted the challenging report which said, in part, "We are learning anew that Christ's commission to his followers is not primarily to increase the census of heaven, but to make down here a righteous society in which Christ's will shall be done. . ."

For several years then Southern Baptists fought the liquor problem passionately through a committee on temperance.

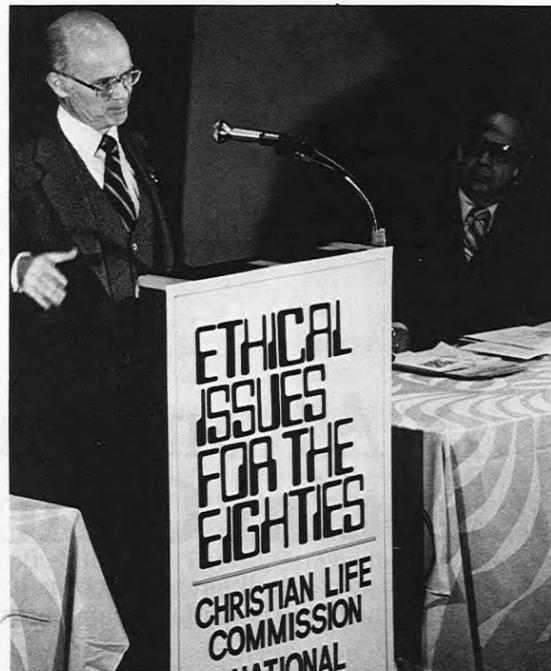
In 1913, a report was presented to the convention that suggested that the church might have the same success fighting other problems that it was having with alcohol. A standing committee, the social service committee, was established "to deal with other wrongs which curse society today."

During the following year's convention a

single slate of members was named to the two standing committees that dealt with social issues. The convention committee on nominations called the group the Social Service and Temperance Committee. After 1920, the agency came to be called the Social Service Commission. A. J. Barton served as chairman of the commission for 26 years.

Social Service Commission

The question of the social mission of Southern Baptists arose again in 1933 and a



Church historian and theologian Martin Marty speaks at a national seminar on "Ethical Issues of the Eighties" in New York sponsored by the Christian Life Commission.

committee was appointed to study a proposal to establish an "agency of Social Research." A debate arose which ended in the tabling of the recommendation in 1936.

Ten years later the new chairman of the Social Service Commission, J. B. Weatherspoon, the professor of Christian ethics and preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, led in an effort to restructure and strengthen the commission. And, in 1947, the executive committee of the convention heeded Weatherspoon's plea and approved a plan which gave the commission a \$10,000 budget allowing it to employ a professional staff.

Brimm First Executive

Hugh Brimm became the first executive secretary of the Social Service Commission. He had been head of the department of sociology and social ethics at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. He moved to Louisville and established the headquarters of the commission there.

Five years later, A. C. Miller, who had been the first secretary of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, became the second executive secretary of the commission when Brimm resigned to accept a teaching post at the Carver School of Missions and Social Work in Louisville. At the same time, the commission offices were moved to Nashville. In 1953, the convention approved the changing of the name of the organization to the Christian Life Commission.

Foy Valentine, the current executive secretary, came to his post in 1960. Under his leadership, the commission has expanded its program significantly and the staff has grown from a director and a secretary to 12 full-time employees.

Agency's Purpose To Help Changed People Change World

This "newspaper" brochure is prepared as an updated report to you regarding the Christian Life Commission. We want you to know something about the agency's Christian morality development program, its staff and the ongoing activities through which we seek to help southern Baptists to accept and apply God's good news in daily life.

This presentation does not, of course, tell the whole story. In fact, it is painfully evident to us that many important things have been left unsaid. Yet, this is a step toward communication; and we think communication between Southern Baptists and the Christian Life Commission is imperative. We have a responsibility to communicate with you about this work which you support. It is therefore with a very real sense of stewardship that we take this opportunity to try to tell you at least part of the Christian Life Commission story.

We earnestly hope that the cause of applied Christianity, which the Commission exists to emphasize, may be brought into somewhat clearer focus by this presentation.

While it is required of "stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2) rather than merely successful, there is still something especially satisfying about success. The successes, however limited, which Southern Baptists have experienced in recent years in the whole field of applied

Christianity give us all reason for encouragement and hope. We face the future with a strong spirit of optimism.

We pledge to Southern Baptists our continued commitment to the Christian Life Commission's purpose of helping changed people to change the world.—Foy Valentine



Agency Confronts Contemporary Moral Issues

A glance at the headlines in a daily newspaper gives an indication of the tremendous challenge facing the Christian Life Commission, an agency charged with the responsibility of helping Southern Baptists apply the gospel to contemporary moral issues.

In today's interdependent world, no Christian is isolated from society's moral problems. Decisions about social concerns, whether they are made by politicians in Washington, the state capitol or the city council or by denominational leaders in Nashville, Richmond or Atlanta, inevitably affect us all.

Drug and alcohol abuse, immoral television programming, gambling and pornography threaten the stability of society.

World-renowned marriage counselors David and Vera Mace lead Christian Life Commission conferences on the family at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.



Global issues such as poverty and world hunger concern every person who takes the call of Christ seriously. The international energy crisis ultimately affects every household and challenges each Christian's commitment to proper stewardship of God-given resources.

Racial injustice still prevails. Public education faces a severe crisis. The nation's criminal justice system calls for reform. Dishonesty in business and government contributes to public distrust of leadership.

In a variety of ways—through preaching, teaching, writing, testifying, organizing and acting to the limits of its resources—the Christian Life Commission seeks to help

Southern Baptists bring the light of the gospel to bear on these and other moral concerns.

Through its literature program, the commission provides educational and practical resource materials for individuals, families and churches. More than eighty pamphlets, booklets and resource papers offer Christian insights on a variety of moral issues.

Conferences and seminars are another tool for informing and educating Southern Baptists. Each spring the commission sponsors a national seminar on a theme related to applied Christianity which attracts a broad cross section of pastors, denominational workers, students and lay persons. Specialized conferences and consultations are held each year to deal with specific issues. Regional conferences, designed primarily for pastors, focus on ways churches can become involved in social action without abandoning a strong emphasis on evangelism.

The commission works closely with state Christian Life Commission organizations or their counterparts as they deal with moral issues of particular concern in their areas. The agency also relates to ethics professors and students at Southern Baptist seminaries.

Commission staff members receive frequent invitations to speak at local churches, seminary and college campuses and various state conferences and seminars. The staff also offers advisory and consultative services to churches, agencies and other Baptist groups in matters pertaining to Christian social concerns.

Commission Calls Attention To Three Major Areas of Social Concern

Citizenship, hunger and race relations are three areas of social concern which are given major attention by the Christian Life Commission.

Each year a special day of observance is set aside on the Southern Baptist Convention calendar for each of these areas of concern.

Special materials promoting citizenship, hunger and race relations emphasis, are prepared each year by the commission.

Christian Citizenship Day is the Sunday before July 4.

According to William H. Elder, III, director of Christian citizenship development for the Commission, Christian citizenship means to appropriately apply the principles of the Gospel to our world through responsible involvement in the political process.

"That definition is the fundamental background out of which the Christian Life Commission develops and carries out its citizenship agenda," Elder said. "The definition includes three indispensable ingredients.

"First there is the Gospel. Citizenship which is distinctively Christian is one which allows the Gospel to determine one's political choices. That means evaluating public policy issues and political predispositions in light of Christian ethical principles and being willing to change

our biases and move in different directions if the insight of the Gospel calls for such adjustments," he said.

"The second ingredient is 'world' in all of its dimensions—global, national, state and local. To act appropriately, the real facts must be known about what is taking place in the world. A Christian citizen simply must study along with the Bible, the newspaper, periodicals, and all of the other possible sources for helping us accurately understand the events and possibilities to which we must respond with the insight of the Gospel," Elder said.

Elder said that the third ingredient for Christian citizenship is responsible involvement in the political process. "Being responsibly involved demands that we understand not simply the way the process is supposed to work but the way it actually works," he said. "So political education all the way from voter registration to contacting a legislator to running for office is indispensable.

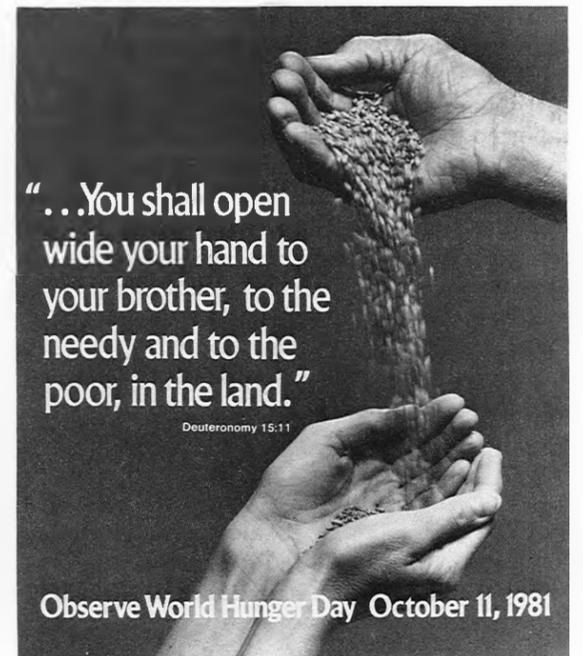
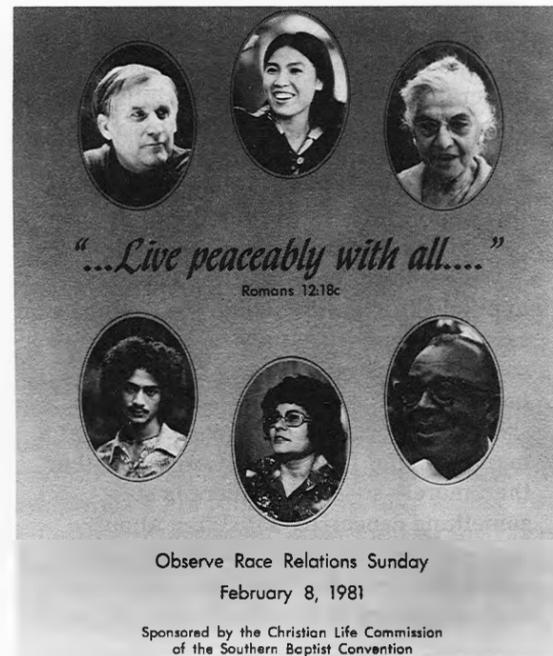
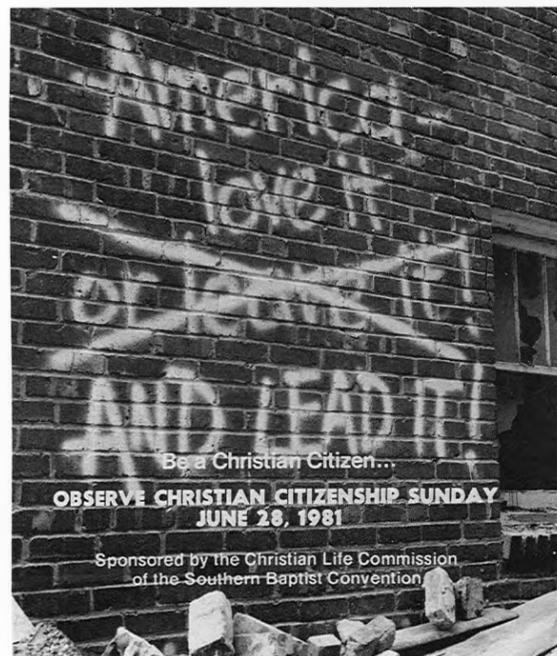
W. David Sapp, director of organization for the Commission says the key to solving the world hunger problem is not increased food production, but implementation of the biblical principle of sharing. "Scientific evidence shows that there is and probably can continue to be enough food for everyone," Sapp says. "What

we lack is the will to share, otherwise known as love. We say that political and economic barriers prevent us from getting food to the starving. But those barriers were erected by human beings, and they can be destroyed by human beings. They are difficult, but conquerable, barriers; they will yield to an onslaught of Christian love."

"If we could call forth a commitment from millions of Baptists around the world to adopt sharing and sacrifice as the style of their lives," he explains, "then Baptists could well become the salt and light which would arouse the rest of the world to banish the evil of starvation from this earth."

John A. Wood, director of program development for the Christian Life Commission, says that a common tendency among Christians to focus on "sins of the flesh" while overlooking "sins of the spirit" has contributed to the problem of racism.

"We have too often understood sin to mean primarily such things as drunkenness, sexual immorality, gambling and pornography," says Wood, who directs the commission's race relations program. "Without minimizing the dangers of the sins of the flesh, the Bible emphasizes more strongly the sins of the spirit, which discriminate against people.



Staff Focuses Energy on Vital Moral Issues

Helping Southern Baptists apply biblical teachings and principles to today's moral concerns is the challenging responsibility of the staff of the Christian Life Commission.

Foy Valentine, the commission's chief administrative officer, directs the staff and coordinates its activities (see story, p. 4).



John A. Wood was elected to the staff of the commission in 1976 as director of program development.

Wood is responsible for coordinating special projects on such issues as race relations and alcohol education and action. He also plans the commission's annual summer conferences at Ridgecrest and Glorieta Baptist Conference Centers and various regional seminars.

A native of Birmingham, Ala., Wood is a graduate of Columbia Bible College, Columbia, S.C. He holds a B.D. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. degree from Baylor University.

Before coming to the commission staff, Wood served three years as director of Caritas, an inter-church social service agency in Waco. In 1972, he directed Block Partnership, a program designed to involve volunteers from churches and community organizations with inner-city residents in solving neighborhood problems.

Wood served as director of Christian social ministries for the Waco Baptist Association from 1968-71, and he worked as an adult probation officer for McLennan County, Texas, from 1967-68.



Mary Elizabeth Tyler is the Commission's administrative assistant. She supervises the secretarial staff and manages the work flow in the offices.

A native of New Orleans, Miss Tyler was graduated from Louisiana College, Pineville. She earned an M.R.E. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has also done graduate study in business administration at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is a certified professional secretary, accredited by the National Secretaries Association (International).

Miss Tyler was secretary to the pastor at First Baptist Church, Knoxville, before joining the commission staff in 1975.

Currently, she is a member of the National Secretaries Association (International) and the Nashville area Louisiana College Alumni Association.



William M. Tillman, Jr. joined the commission staff in October 1977 as director of research and editorial services.

Tillman's primary responsibilities include

maintaining a research program in Christian ethics to provide background and resource materials for the Christian Life Commission, seminary ethics professors, state Christian Life Commission counterparts, and other interested Southern Baptists.

He also serves as managing editor of *LIGHT*, the agency's bi-monthly newsletter. In addition he is responsible for channeling moral concerns of the Commission to other Southern Baptist publications and is responsible for supervision of the special project coordinator.

A native of Oklahoma, Tillman holds the M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also earned M.Ed. and B.S. degrees from Southeastern (Okla.) State College.

Tillman was a Ph.D. teaching fellow in Christian ethics for three semesters at Southwestern Seminary and he taught high school in McAlester, Okla., for four years.

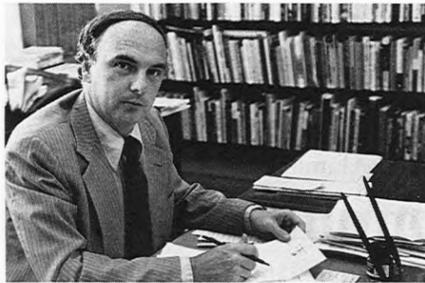


W. David Sapp is director of organization for the Commission.

Sapp is responsible for the development of work in the general area of applied Christianity in the various state organizations as well as other Southern Baptist Convention agencies. He coordinates the commission's annual seminar and other specialized conferences and gives leadership to emphases on energy, world hunger, and economics and daily work.

A graduate of Mercer University, Macon, Ga., Sapp also earned the M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sapp was a staff member at Southern seminary before coming to the commission in 1976. Under appointment as an associate missionary of the Home Mission Board, he served as associate pastor and director of weekday activities at Twenty-third and Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville from 1972-74. He also pastored churches in Georgia, Michigan and Indiana.



Harry N. Hollis, Jr. is associate executive director and director of family and special moral concerns.

Hollis is responsible for leadership in such areas as family life, sexuality, gambling, obscenity, and biomedical issues. He has also coordinated the commission's efforts in the area of television and morality. As associate executive secretary, he carries full administrative responsibility for the commission when the executive secretary is absent from the office.

A Memphis native, Hollis is a graduate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He also holds M. Div. and Ph.D. degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Hollis was an instructor in Christian ethics at Southern seminary before coming to the commission in 1969. He was pastor of the Finchville, Ky., Baptist Church from 1961-69.

He is the author of three books, *The Shoot-'em-up Society*, *Thank God for Sex!* and *Family Life Today*. He also compiled and contributed to *Christian Freedom for Women and Other Human Beings* and *A Matter of Life and Death*.

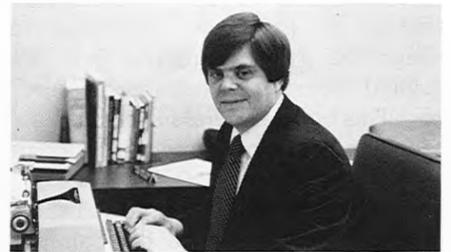


Raymond E. Higgins II is special project coordinator for correlating Christian social action and Christian social ministries for the Home Mission Board and the Christian Life Commission.

A native of Arkansas, he joined the staff in August of 1980. Higgins received a B.A. degree from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and earned a Master of Divinity degree with an emphasis on ethics from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He worked as an intern during the spring of 1980 for the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Higgins plans to work toward a Ph.D. degree in Christian ethics upon completion of his two-year project at the Commission.



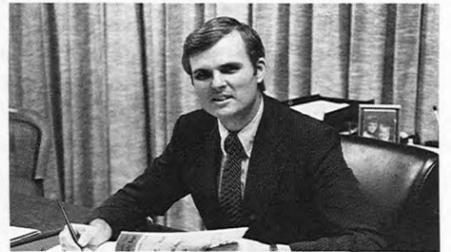
Timothy J. Fields joined the Commission staff in June of 1980 as director of communications.

Among Fields' major assignments is the development of a comprehensive program of news and information services through Baptist Press and other denominational and secular publications.

He is also responsible for public relations activities and for the Commission's literature program including editing, production and sales and distribution of materials. In addition, he serves as production editor of *LIGHT*.

A native of Kansas, he earned a B.S. degree in journalism from Kansas State University at Manhattan and is working toward completion of a M.R.E. degree from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Fields came to the Commission from the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission where he served on the staff for nine years as an editor of Baptist Men and Royal Ambassador publications and as assistant to the program director.



William H. Elder, III is director of Christian Citizenship Development. He came to this position in 1978 after running a strong though unsuccessful race for the United States Congress.

Elder directs the commission's efforts to communicate citizenship concerns through special seminars, literature programs and speaking engagements. He also coordinates the activities of the Christian Citizenship Corps which is a nationwide, grass roots network of Southern Baptists who are committed to applying the Gospel to the world through responsible involvement in the political process. He works to develop Southern Baptist liaison with government at all levels.

A native of New Orleans, Elder graduated with a B.A. degree from Baylor University, Waco, Texas. After receiving an M. Div. degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., he returned to Baylor where he earned a Ph.D. degree in biblical studies.

For seven years he served as a member of the religion faculty of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

Valentine Committed to Applied Christianity

To some Southern Baptists, he's a "burr under the saddle"; to some he's the "leader of the loyal opposition"; to others, he's a "symbol of hope."

Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission since 1960, has been a figure of controversy.

Some have branded him, "Too liberal"; others call him "an ultraconservative."

Like any institutional chief, his image and that of the commission are blurred together. And, in Valentine's case, this observation is accurate for more than one reason.

When he became executive secretary of the commission June 1, 1960, he and the office secretary comprised the commission's staff. In those days, criticism of the commission started and stopped with Valentine.

Although the scene has changed drastically since then, Valentine's convictions, concerns and commitments are still apparent in the work of the agency.

Throughout the years that he has headed the Christian Life Commission, he has doggedly pressed on Southern Baptists the demands of the gospel in regard to moral concerns and social action. (He is a firm believer in the value of tension, a lesson he attributes to the teachings of his Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics professor, T. B. Maston.) This constant pressure from Valentine has been the cause of many of the comments made about him.

His approach to the application of the gospel is more than a response to the commission's program statement which he helped formulate when he first came to his job; it is the natural expression of his personal convictions.

"My own commitments to the lordship of Jesus Christ demand a Bible-based and experience-rooted theology coupled with a radical obedience to God in regard to all the social issues that affect people made in God's image," he explains.

East Texas Roots

Born July 3, 1923, Valentine's upbringing was consistent with stereotypes one might have of growing up during the Depression on an East Texas farm with a Baptist deacon father and a Sunday School teaching mother. For his education, he went away to the big Texas Baptist school, Baylor University. There he completed a triple major in Bible, speech and English and was elected permanent president of his senior class. He received a B. A. degree in 1944 and still likes to go back to Baylor for homecoming festivities.

He entered Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and earned a Th.M. degree in 1947 and a Th.D. degree in 1949 when he had just turned 26. He completed his doctoral work two years after first serving as a special representative in race relations for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and then as director of Baptist student activities for the colleges of Houston.

While in seminary Valentine dated a young lady, a Rice University graduate from Houston, whom he later married, also named Valentine—Mary Louise.

In 1950, he was called to pastor the First Baptist Church of Gonzales. He served there

LIGHT Focuses on Critical Issues

LIGHT, a bimonthly Christian social ethics publication was introduced about 30 years ago as a monthly publication of the Social Service Commission the forerunner of the Christian Life Commission.

LIGHT was distributed only as an "occasional bulletin" after the early 1960's, but in 1978 it was reactivated as a regular publication.

The current 12-page newsletter format is designed to communicate information and ideas about current ethical issues and appropriate social action to interested pastors, students, church staff and denominational workers in the field of Christian ethics.



until he became director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, a post he held for seven years.

Agency Head

When he accepted the position as executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, it was a fledgling agency, relatively newborn after a long struggle to fund a permanent convention-wide organization to emphasize the social imperatives of the gospel.

But there had finally come to be a Southern Baptist commitment to the broader Baptist causes of social concern and moral justice, and Valentine was the man to lead the movement.

Since he moved to Nashville to take the reins of the commission, the agency has faced the issues squarely and built a broader base of support among Southern Baptists. Valentine, however, is quick to credit the commission's two previous leaders, Hugh Brimm and A. C. Miller, as the early architects of the agency's destiny. "They led courageously and well when the going was really tough," he says.

Usually there is a book in the making on one of the burners of the Valentine stove. He already has six titles to his credit. Broadman Press published *Believe and Behave* in 1964 and *Citizenship for Christians* in 1965. *The Cross in the Marketplace* was published in 1966 by Word Books and *Where the Action Is: Studies in James* in 1969. He was compiler and editor of *Christian Faith in Action*, which was published by Broadman in 1956. In 1967, Word Books released *Peace! Peace!* which Valentine compiled and edited.

He has just completed work on a book to be published by Word entitled *What Do You Say After You've Said Amen* and is writing on Hebrews, James and I and II Peter for the Broadman *Layman's Bible Commentary*.

William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., conferred the doctor of divinity degree on Valentine in 1966 and in 1970 Southwestern Seminary's alumni association gave him its Distinguished Alumni Award.

Pamphlet Series Outlines Social Issues

The Christian Life Commission, in keeping with its task of speaking and acting on moral issues, has prepared a series of resource pamphlets which relate what the Bible has to say about 10 current social concerns.

Entitled "The Bible Speaks" series, the pamphlets present carefully chosen Scripture selections related to family, race, hunger, aging, alcohol, citizenship, sex, money, ecology, and war and peace.

The series was developed to help Southern Baptists apply the Bible's message to some of today's most serious social issues, according to Executive Director Foy Valentine.

"The Bible deals forthrightly with the issues of everyday life and focuses God's light on complex moral issues confronting Christians in the world," he said. "We believe it is extremely important, particularly at a time when there is a revived interest in Bible study and when Southern Baptists are receiving not only higher visibility but also greater opportunities for Christian witness than ever before, that what we do and say about the issues of our time be instructed and directed by the Word of God."

The undated set of pamphlets enables pas-

In 1975, *The Christian Century* named him one of 20 innovative leaders in the religious world.

Popular Speaker

As a lecturer and speech maker, Valentine is often in demand. Program responsibilities and speaking engagements keep him flying back and forth across the country in a dizzying schedule. Adjustments to time zone changes are an occupational hazard for him.

Although he sees his busy schedule as a sign that support for the concerns of applied Christianity is increasing among Southern Baptists, Valentine, if he had his druthers, would probably set aside another month each year to go trout fishing in Red River, N. M. He prefers to go with his family, but with three busy daughters—the eldest is a psychiatric social worker in Nashville, the next oldest is a law student at the University of Texas in Austin and the youngest daughter is married to a Southern Baptist pastor in Waco—that opportunity doesn't come very often.

At the office, Valentine now finds more time for preparing statements about important social and moral issues confronting Southern Baptists, thanks to more staff personnel to handle the commission's ongoing program responsibilities.

In the past, some of those statements which Valentine has tailored have not always been popular. The commission's position on race, capital punishment, sex education, extremism and freedom for women have left some Southern Baptists muttering in the aisles at convention sessions.

In the wake of one disheartening defeat at a convention several years ago, Valentine wrote out a personal manifesto which he keeps in his desk drawer and refers to frequently. It reads, "I shall neither withdraw from the world nor be conformed to it. This means that I must daily bear the cross; and this I do if not gladly, then at least resolutely."

Commission statements in the future may not be any more popular, but Valentine never takes them lightly. He spends many hours living with them and praying about them before they go to the press or to the convention floor.

Consistently through his days at the commission, Valentine has taken the position of the rigorous, maybe strict, Bible-believing Baptist, opposing the compromise of essentials of the Christian faith. He has been there fighting for the people of God to be God's people in the world.

It is this stance, the position statements on various moral issues, the national seminars, the sermons, the conferences and other commission activities that many Southern Baptists see as signs of hope.

Others see the same things as just more trouble from the burr under the saddle.

tors, teachers, parents, and individual Christians to have at their fingertips a basic list of Scriptures which deal with these 10 issues.

"The Bible Speaks" was carefully prepared by the Christian Life Commission's staff, with the help of state Christian Life Commission staff persons. The series makes no attempt to offer an exhaustive list of Scriptures, according to Valentine, but it is designed to encourage understanding, discussion and further Bible study.

