

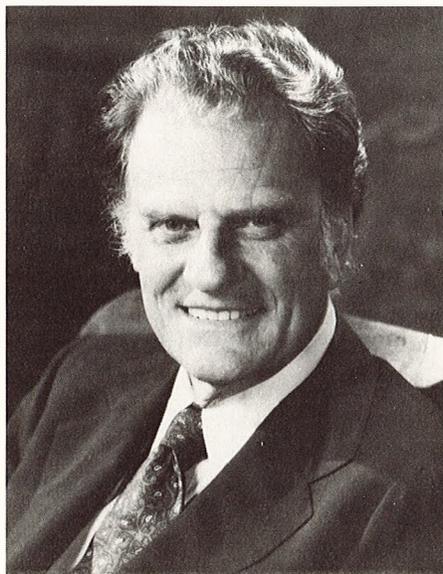
LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

March-April 1982

An Interview with Billy Graham **Speaking on Ethics**

EDITORS NOTE: The following interview with Billy Graham was conducted by David Lockard, Director of Organization for the Christian Life Commission. Since the interview, Graham has accepted an invitation to go to Moscow to preach on Mother's Day and to address a conference related to the avoidance of nuclear war and the achievement of peace with justice. Graham's unique witness for world evangelization and for world peace merits our strong prayer support.



Billy Graham

GRAHAM: On the whole I believe the influence has been positive. There are certainly many people who have been converted through these ministries and have then become involved in the church. In some instances I am sure churches have also become more aware of the need for evangelism (for example) because of the ministry of parachurch organizations.

At the same time, however, there have unfortunately been some instances of parachurch groups and media preachers who have not been as supportive of the local church as they should have. This is unfortunate, because believers need the fellowship of other believers. In our Crusades we have always stressed working with local churches, and do all we can to point those who have made commitments to Christ to local churches.

LIGHT: How have the Old Testament prophets influenced your ministry?

GRAHAM: I have been tremendously influenced by the Old Testament prophets. For one thing, I have always been challenged by their deep commitment to God and his work and their determination to declare the Word of God regardless of the cost to them personally. Also, I have been greatly influenced by their basic themes. They had a

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LIGHT: Are repentance and change stressed enough in contemporary Christianity?

GRAHAM: No, I don't believe they are. All too often we have given the impression that grace is cheap, or being a Christian is just a matter of easy belief.

But the New Testament stresses discipleship. It stresses that when a man comes to Christ he must leave his old life behind and follow Christ. Christ commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). I'm afraid there are far too many people in our

churches who would say they believe in Christ—they believe he was the Son of God, that he died on the cross for our sins, and he rose again from the dead—but they have never really committed themselves to him. We need to hear Jesus' words again, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

LIGHT: How have parachurch groups and media preachers influenced the church as a whole? Local churches?

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deep concern for justice, for example, and they always stressed the need for repentance and turning to God. They also underlined God's love for his people, and his willingness to receive them and forgive them. More than that, they pointed to Christ, who was to come. That also is the supreme task of God's people today—to point to Christ.

LIGHT: Do you regard speaking out on social issues, even controversial ones, as an important part of the Gospel?

GRAHAM: Social issues are not the same as the Gospel. That is, a preacher may speak about a certain social issue, but that does not mean he is necessarily preaching the Gospel. When we proclaim the Gospel, we are declaring what God has done in Jesus Christ to bring salvation to men, and what men must do in response.

At the same time, I doubt if there is any significant social issue that I have not preached on at one time or another. One reason for this is because problems within society are actually demonstrations of our deeper problem—a problem of sin. They are the evidences of humanity's rebellion against God. Then I think we need to stress as well that when a person comes to Christ, he will be committed to righteousness—both in his own life and in society.

LIGHT: Where do you try to stand in speaking out on those issues? What dangers do you see?

GRAHAM: There are very real dangers in any clergyman—particularly an evangelist—getting too involved in political issues. There are many very, very difficult and complex issues in this world, and we do not necessarily know the answer to them just because we are preachers or Christians. At the same time, I always try to look beneath the immediate issue to see if there is a moral principle involved. There are some issues facing our society that involve clear-cut moral principles. I believe the church must be very careful and cautious about getting involved in political issues, particularly partisan political matters. But individual Christians have a responsibility

to speak out on matters where moral principles are clearly at stake.

LIGHT: Do you regard the United States as God's chosen nation?

GRAHAM: God has blessed our nation in many ways in the past, and I am deeply grateful for our country. However, God's concern is with people, not with nations. We cannot assume that just because God has blessed us in the past that we will be immune from his judgment in the future. In fact, I am deeply concerned about the moral and spiritual drift in our land. The Bible clearly teaches that God judges nations that turn their backs on him. There is no guarantee whatsoever that God will not do that

need to realize in a fuller way that everything we have has come from God's hand, and we are to be only stewards.

Unfortunately, there is also a negative side. Materialism and affluence have all too often made us "at ease in Zion." Far too many people—and I am talking about Christians now—have gotten their priorities wrong. We have not sought the Kingdom of God and his righteousness above all else, but have pursued material wealth and pleasure instead. In addition, materialism has often shaped our thinking. We have forgotten we are commanded to, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2). We have lost sight of the fact

"What I have actually endorsed is Salt X—the complete destruction of all nuclear weapons."—Billy Graham

to us—and in fact we may already be seeing signs of his judgment on our land.

LIGHT: What is the greatest danger of someone such as yourself speaking out on political issues?

GRAHAM: I believe my calling as an evangelist is to make the Gospel as clear as possible to people, and then call them to commitment to Christ. If I were to get deeply involved in political issues, my message would become unclear and confusing. It is Christ who saves men and women, not adherence to any particular political philosophy. We must be very careful of diluting the Gospel message. Also, as I suggested earlier, it is often difficult for us to know exactly what stand to take on a political issue. When we are dealing with the Gospel we are dealing with the truth of God, but when we are dealing with political issues we may not necessarily know what the full truth is. We need a great deal of humility about this.

LIGHT: How have materialism and affluence affected Americans, especially Christians?

GRAHAM: On the positive side, America's prosperity has meant that the church has been able to support a large number of missionaries and relief efforts in many parts of the world. I am grateful for this, although I do not believe on the whole we have been nearly as sacrificial in our giving as we could have been. We

that millions upon millions of people live on the knife edge of starvation in our world, and we have been selfish and uncaring.

LIGHT: What responsibilities do we as Americans, as American Christians, have to other nations in economic matters?

GRAHAM: This is not an easy question to answer, because the issues are extremely complex. We all still need to do a great deal of thinking about this. Certainly, however, we ought to be concerned about the great gulf between the rich nations and the poor nations. We need to be concerned about starvation and malnutrition. At the same time, we have to avoid simplistic thinking, believing that somehow a change in the economic or social systems will erase all the problems.

LIGHT: Why did you endorse SALT II?

GRAHAM: What I have actually endorsed is SALT X—the complete destruction of all nuclear weapons. We live in an age which is completely without parallel in history. For the first time, humanity has the awesome ability to destroy itself. As a Christian, of course, I believe that the last word is with God, not man, and that God will not permit us to destroy the human race on our own. But our modern weapons have an incredible

capacity for destruction, and this must concern every Christian.

We need to recognize, however, that the basic issues in our world are spiritual. We have wars and the threat of war because of the greeds and lusts of the human heart. Certainly we need to do all we can to work for peace in our world. At the same time, we know as Christians that only Christ can change the human heart. Political solutions alone will not do the job. I believe we need to work for peace in the world, and our most effective way of doing that is by preaching the Gospel of the Prince of Peace.

LIGHT: Do you detect much evidence of fear in the world? Is it worse than ten or twenty years ago?

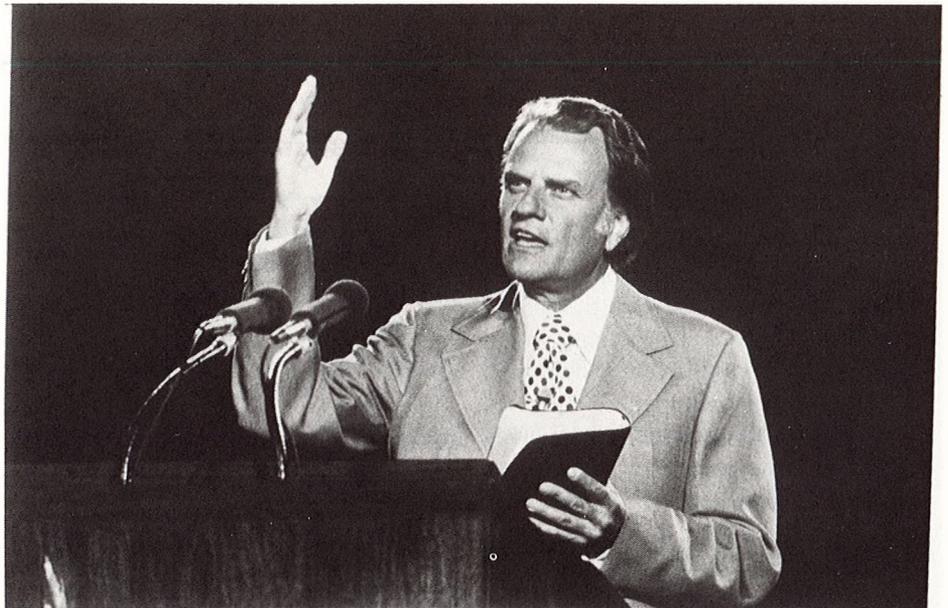
GRAHAM: In some ways modern man is almost numb because of the events of the last few decades. Many people, I find, are almost fatalistic about the future. They sense that somehow our world is falling apart, but they don't believe that anything can be done about it. At the same time, I believe there is growing fear and anxiety in our world today. Jesus spoke of a time when men's hearts would fail them for fear, and you can't help but feel that we are approaching that time.

This is a great challenge to those of us who know Jesus Christ. Christ is the One who is able to calm and quiet the fears of the human heart, because he alone gives us hope for the future. It is interesting to note that some of the great revivals of our time are taking place in areas of the world which are beset by chaos and fear. In such times, people seem to realize their only hope is in God.

LIGHT: In your opinion, do we need to be embarked on the program of military buildup which is now occurring, especially of nuclear weapons?

GRAHAM: I was told in Europe that both the United States and the Soviet Union have enough nuclear weapons to destroy the whole continent of Europe thirteen or fourteen times over. Certainly a terrible sword of Damocles hangs over the human race because of the constant production of nuclear weapons.

I wish the great nations of the world could move ahead on a practical program of disarmament. I am not a pacifist, and I am not in favor of unilateral disar-



“Certainly a terrible sword of Damocles hangs over the human race because of the constant production of nuclear weapons.”—Billy Graham

mament. Disarmament will take cooperation on all sides, and that involves a certain level of trust on all sides. That is going to be difficult to achieve, particularly in the current political climate. We need to pray for our president, and for the leaders of the other nations of the world, that progress will be made on this issue.

LIGHT: You have said that you think racial problems might be facing the nation again. Why?

GRAHAM: I have talked with many leaders in our country—both black and white—and have found a great deal of concern about this. Perhaps one reason, of course, is the country's present economic situation, which highlights the poverty of many of our minority people.

During the last few decades there have been many positive steps to fight discrimination, such as new laws. These have helped in many ways, but at the same time we are discovering that they have not necessarily eliminated the economic problems—unemployment, poverty, lack of opportunity—that affect so many ethnic minorities. We have also discovered that simply changing the law does not necessarily change the attitudes of people. Christians in our nation must not assume that the racial issue has been solved just because many laws have

been changed. It is a continuing problem, and Christians, of all people, need to set an example of love and concern for justice.

LIGHT: Do you think that the hard right (or political right) is interested in manipulating religion?

GRAHAM: I don't consider myself a member of the hard political right, so I don't think I am in the best position to answer a question like this. As a general principle, however, there are always those—both on the left and the right—who may try to manipulate religion to their own uses. This is one reason I believe the church needs to be very wary about becoming deeply involved in political and social issues. By doing so, it becomes very vulnerable to manipulation. That manipulation can come from the right or the left.

LIGHT: Why is family decay so prominent in our society?

GRAHAM: As a Christian I believe the ultimate reason is because we have left God out of family life all too often. It is commonly said that a good marriage involves three people—the husband, the wife, and God. When we neglect him and his moral laws, then we begin to make up our own laws and that is disastrous.

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... Billy Graham

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Certainly the heart of many of the problems in marriages today is failure to love. Our society is infected with selfishness on every hand. Young people are constantly told to "do your own thing." We also have given the idea that life should be without any problems, and that if problems crop up we should bail out of a marriage. But that is simply not so. A marriage involves work. It involves love, which is the opposite of selfishness. I am greatly distressed by the decay in family life in our nation, and I believe it is one of the most crucial challenges facing the church today. We should be doing all we can to bring stability into the marriages of people in the church and we should do all we can to help our young people who are looking toward marriage.

LIGHT: What advice would you give to husbands?

GRAHAM: Well, I could write a whole book on this subject! One thing I have found, is that a husband really needs to learn to be gentle with his wife. He needs to learn tenderness. He needs to pay careful attention to the small things in a marriage that keep the spark of love alive and growing. Most marriages don't fall apart by design—they slowly fall apart by neglect. A man needs to be sure that his priorities are straight—Christ first, then others including his family. Far too many husbands put their career first or their recreational interests first.

LIGHT: What advice would you give to wives?

GRAHAM: I ought to let my wife Ruth answer this! She has just written a book on the subject entitled, *It's My Turn*.

However, wives need to realize that their husbands need a great deal of emotional support. They may not always want to admit it, but they need encouragement and support. No man likes a wife who is constantly cutting him down or nagging him. And just as the husband needs to pay attention to the little things that keep love alive, so the wife needs to pay attention to them also.

"Certainly the heart of many of the problems in marriages today is failure to love. Our society is infected with selfishness on every hand."—Billy Graham

LIGHT: How can churches affect family life, either positively or negatively?

GRAHAM: For one thing, through our teaching we need to stress the priority of family life. We also need to do that in our practice. I have heard of churches that have meetings every night of the week, and I don't think that sets a good example for family life. We also need to encourage people in practical ways so that they grow together as a family spiritually. Are we teaching people, for example, how to have family devotions?

LIGHT: You have expressed some concern about the super churches. Why?

GRAHAM: Large churches are not necessarily wrong. At the same time, in large churches it is much easier for a person to get lost and remain relatively uninvolved in the life of the church. If a particular church happens to be quite large, I think its leaders need to think through very carefully how each individual will be ministered to in a personal way. Of course small churches can lose sight of the individual also, but the danger is usually found in larger churches.

LIGHT: You have always emphasized financial integrity. Does the emphasis on fund raising and the manner in which it is done by media preachers disturb you?

GRAHAM: In some instances it cer-

tainly does. The same is true of fund raising in some churches I have seen also. Paul said, "Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception" (2 Corinthians 4:2). That includes deception about our message, but I believe it also applies to our methods in all we do—including fund raising. I think we especially need to be sensitive to the way our fund raising in the church is perceived by outsiders. There also needs to be very careful financial accountability within any Christian organization. It is interesting, for example, to note the care with which Paul dealt with the collection for the Jerusalem Christians (see especially 2 Corinthians 8 and 9).

LIGHT: Is the pro-morality emphasis of the New Religious Right defined broadly enough?

GRAHAM: I am not sure exactly to what you are referring, but I certainly share concern for the moral issues that have been highlighted by some groups today. We need to be deeply concerned about issues of personal morality. We also need to be concerned about hunger, peace, and justice. We have a responsibility to be concerned about social issues, although that is not our main message as Christians. We have a glorious Gospel, and we must never lose sight of our Lord's command to proclaim that Gospel. We need to be witnesses of his love and grace—both by our words and our deeds.



David Lockard

David Lockard, who conducted the written interview with Billy Graham, has had a special interest in Graham and his ministry for the past twenty years.

While teaching ethics and evangelism to African seminarians Lockard became more acutely aware that ethics and evangelism go together.

Consequently he wrote his Th.D. dissertation on "The Place of Ethics in the Evangelistic Ministry of Billy Graham." In 1973 Lockard wrote *The Unheard Billy Graham* which was the first major book dealing with the ethical dimension of Graham's ministry.

Strengthening Families in the Nation

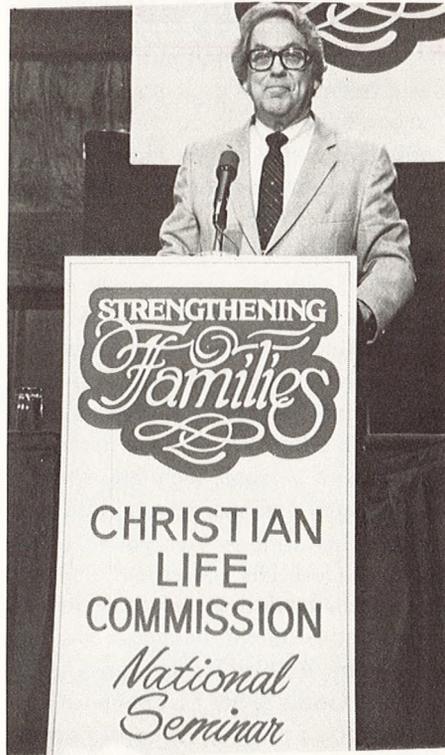
by Jimmy R. Allen

The family is fighting for its life in contemporary America. While vast differences can be found among earnest Christians about interpretations of Biblical truths to meet this challenge, virtually every thoughtful Christian agrees that the family as the revealed intention of God for human experience is fighting for its life.

The Family In Contemporary America

The death rate for marriages is at an all time high. We thought it was high in the post world war period of 1946 when there were 4.3 divorces per 1000 total population. Now it is 5.3 divorces per 1000 total population in 1981. More dramatically, every year since 1975 has seen more than a million divorces in America. The death rate virtually doubled from 1970 to 1980. The funeral capitals of the nation have shifted from wild and permissive California in the 1960s to the Bible Belt Southwest in 1981. The highest death rate for marriages in the nation's major cities were in Dallas-Fort Worth and in Houston with 8.2 divorces for every 1000 people . . . more than double New York City . . . and a third higher than Los Angeles. It is ironic that it is on our doorstep as Southern Baptists. Marriages are dying all around us and within our church families.

For every marriage that dies with a formal funeral called divorce, there are others which die and are never declared dead. There are couples living in strident conflict, with hostility as the atmosphere they breathe. They have murdered the marriage long ago but are chained to its corpse like ancient men punishing criminals. There are some existing in stony silence. They perform their daily tasks fearful to examine the relationship lest it crumble in their hands. Children dance on the edge of cliffs of destructive behavior trying to get the attention of parents who are going through the motions of marriage. Parents carry the cadaver around "for the children's sake" and



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wait for the day the children leave so they can leave also.

Behind every statistic there is a pain-filled life. You who are ministering in his name can close your eyes and see those faces and remember stories of struggle, failure, and suffering. I see Helen sitting there, tightly controlled, wound to the breaking point, as if the discipline by which she carefully did her work, cared for her children, and conducted her teaching program at the church would suffice to keep her world from crumbling. Her doctor husband has finished medical school. She has scraped, sacrificed, and supported him through it. Now that's done, and he's gone. "He says we've grown apart. How could we keep from it with him gone all the time? I've worked to support him. Now he's found another woman at the hospital. How am I going to tell the children he won't be here . . . not because of his work but because he doesn't want to be. I guess I just couldn't fulfill his needs." Hear the throb of that pain, not only for the marriage and the children but "I am a failure, I couldn't make it work, I am not the kind of woman I need to be."

Or Tom, calling urgently for a confer-

ence that day. "I've never met you. I saw you on television. I'm desperate. She left me. I never knew it was that important." Tears and panic followed. "I'll do anything, anything, to get my wife and kids back. Just tell me what to do." The praying and repenting and transforming changed Tom's life. It did not get his wife and kids back. She was not about to respond to Tom's conversion and risk that pain again. She was gone.

Or Pam, brought to my study late one night by a deacon's wife, slim, blonde, beautiful, country club lifestyle, more at home on a tennis court than in a pastor's study, wearing dark shades. But those shades were covering the black eye and bruises. The story comes slowly, then in a rush, confidential, apprehensive. No one must know that her psychologist husband who was an expert on the problem of abused wives and battered children had beaten her. Private pain soon to become public divorce.

The family is fighting for its life. In the nation's divorce capital, the *Dallas Morning News* conducted interviews to cite causes. They asked divorcees for insights from their experience. Sixty-three percent talked of breakdown in communications and half of those spoke of growing apart in their interests. Specifically citing the atmosphere of that city as contributing to the death rate of marriages, these victims cited factors which apply to our total society. Twenty-six percent cited "a casual attitude toward sex and the swinging single lifestyle." Twenty-four percent spoke of competitive pressures and the pressures to achieve in the business world. Fifteen percent pointed out the mobility factor with "isolation, lack of family and neighborhood support for the couple.

For all its pain and problems, the divorce rate, evidence of the family's fight for survival, presupposes that marriage IS a goal to be aimed for. A far more serious threat to the family is the growing number of Americans who are rejecting the concept of marriage itself. That the family is sick is a cause for concern. That the family is not essential or desirable is a cause for alarm.

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The Bureau of Census reports that between 1970 and 1979 the number of unmarried couples in the nation more than doubled . . . from 523,000 to 1,346,000. While these couples account for only two percent of all households and three percent of all couple-households, the trend of non-marriage is a challenge to the essence of the Christian concept of home and family. The number of out-of-wedlock births rose from 398,700 in 1970 to 468,100 in 1976 or an increase of 17 percent despite all the birth control mechanisms and abortions in that period.

There was a day when we listened with fascination to missionaries telling of Christless cultures in which the commitment to Jesus would mean a decision to enter into marriage covenant with one husband and one wife publicly announced and committed to each other. Non-marriage in other cultures was viewed as an interesting pagan practice to be challenged by the Christian gospel. That day of isolation is over. Most of you, as I have, have sat with couples stating the claims of the gospel for the idea of marriage . . . arguing in the marketplace of ideas for its existence, desirability, and disciplines . . . and ended up performing marriages for couples who had been in non-marriage relationships. That brand of paganism is no longer foreign to our American experience.

Another factor in the family's fight for survival is the attempt by a segment of our society to promote homosexuality as an acceptable and alternative life style. The effort to defend or glorify that life style as if there were no principles of human sexuality revealed by God in his Word should be rejected. It constitutes a major attack on the concept of family. Dealing with compassion and concern for persons who have chosen a homosexual life style does not mean justifying that disordered behavior as desirable or acceptable. Rejecting that claim does not justify on the other hand the vindictiveness and hostility sometimes heaped on the person involved in that behavior. Someone has called the homosexual the "leper" of our society, treated in the same way as the lepers of

Jesus' day. If that is so, Jesus set the pattern for us. He reached out and touched the leper. It gave the leper cleansing but did not give Jesus leprosy. In touching and loving and helping, Jesus never sought to do so by justifying the condition. We do no favor to people caught up in this life style when we treat it as if it were not against the intention of God for their lives.

The family of faith I served as pastor was filled with wounded people getting whole, lepers getting cleansed. We were a fellowship in which we all knew we were sinners, with disordered lives being brought into harmony with God and thus with each other. We saw the miracle of numbers of persons, including some homosexual persons, coming into that sense of harmony and wholeness by the grace of God. His power can alter and strengthen the disciplines of our inner life for altered behavior, whatever that may need to be. It called for the transforming touch of God's Spirit, the prayerful support of God's people, the corrective and sometimes confrontive assistance of God's undershepherds. The process was often painful and difficult and sometimes dismaying. I shall not soon forget the day a recent convert to Christ came to tell me of her homosexuality. As she recounted it, I said, "Well, Jane, in the first place we must see that this is sin. It is out of God's intentioned order for our lives." She blurted out, "O thank God, I was afraid you were going to tell me it was all right and I just had to adjust to it." The grace of God is sufficient, but it must be built on truth as God reveals it.

I've been saying the family is fighting for its life in our nation. The Christian message centers in the promulgation of God's original blueprint for life in which the relationship of marriage was one of God's best gifts and in his basic plan.

I'm very optimistic about this battle for the family. Christians have faced it before, in almost the same shape, in the first century. When Jesus came into the world in the "fullness of time," he came into a world in which divorce was rampant. The greco-roman world was geared to easy marriage and non-marriage. Multiple divorces were the order of the day for the ruling classes of that empire. It was an age in which sexual permissiveness and homosexual life

styles were unchallenged. There were no moral and ethical judgments against them except in a few minor religions like Judaism. That was a world of permissiveness in which families failed to function, in which violence was a way of life not only in war but in pleasure, and in which moral corruption was the order of the day. Yet into this world came this little group of people who were followers of the Way. They so lived, so taught, so demonstrated, and so died as to win the minds and lives of that day. The power of their truth and the God who had created life in the first place assured them of a spiritual awakening in which whole nations were shaken and reshaped in the light of Jesus Christ as Lord. The same conditions and the same challenge belong to us today. We are here seeking to fulfill that challenge by strengthening the families of our nation. How is that to be done in our nation?

Centering Our Motivation for Strengthening Families In the Will of God for Persons Rather than the Health of the Nation State

The fact that the family is the basic unit of a society has made it easy for those concerned about the nation to become concerned about the state of the family. While that does bridge a gap between believers and non-believers in general concerns about family life, it is not a sufficient motivation for Christians. It is not enough to be concerned about the family for patriotic reasons. While there is a genuine interaction between the health of a nation and the health of the family unit, and Christian citizenship should be encouraged, the basis for our unique concern for the family is the purpose of God in fulfilling persons, fashioning convictions, and nurturing Christian idealism. Christian family life has survived under many forms of governments, economic systems, and educational institutions. Appealing to anxieties over family life to enlist political energy or issues only slightly involved in family matters is to divert energy away from the main challenge and to increase ultimate disillusion. Civil religion is dangerous because it overpromises and underproduces. If all of the actions which laws and

political powers could produce were done, the basic needs of the families would remain unaddressed and unmet.

Calling for Convictions Which are Demonstrated with Compassion

The revelation of God in the life of Israel was culminated in the coming of His Son Jesus. The Bible records that unfolding revelation as it shows the ideals and intentions of God for man. He always reveals those in absolutes. He doesn't say "Be almost perfect." He says, "Be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). He knew if we had an "almost" in there, we'd crowd all our favorite sins into that almost. He therefore speaks to us in absolutes, then he graces us with his cleansing and forgiveness when we fall short of his absolute. He reveals his intentions in principles, not in regulations. Regulations are brittle. They fall apart when a human situation changes. Principles are permanent. They can be applied to every human situation. The principles He reveals are in harmony with the way he created the universes. They flow into correlation with the way life will be perfectly experienced when Jesus comes and the kingdom or reign of God is consummated. We must call believers in our nation to renewed dedication to his revealed will.

The Principle of the Sacredness of the Marriage Covenant.

In our age of mobility and change, long term commitments are avoided like the plague. Contracts are to be renegotiated or discarded. Promises made on fair days disappear on foul ones. Plans for vocation and career are altered so often that a sense of impermanence hangs over all our lives. People fear deep commitments to each other. It is just for this age that Christians are the preserving salt and the illuminating light. We are to hold up the ideals of commitments that last and the determination to fulfill our promises. The concept of the sacredness of the marriage agreement calls for willingness to work at the relationship when it is hard as well as when it is easy. We must unapologetically accent the intention of God . . . two becoming

"People fear deep commitments to each other. It is just for this age that Christians are the preserving salt and the illuminating light."—Jimmy R. Allen

one . . . one man and one woman together for life.

Yet, God also deals with those who miss the mark. I know some of you may have manuscript problems with the John 8 account of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery. I don't. I don't know how the Holy Spirit managed to get that account tied onto John's manuscript, but I have no doubt the same Ultimate Author did it. When Jesus dealt with her without condemnation but with instruction for the future, he reflected the pattern of his dealing with all of us who have missed the point or fallen short of the mark.

As I was preaching one day about how God still hates divorce, some of my folks became concerned that I had added to the burden of some of our single adults who had gone through the grief of marriage failure and were trying to put their lives back together. A single adult and divorcee spoke up to say, "Don't worry about it, pastor. We felt your love and heartbrokenness in telling us that truth. Not only does God hate divorce, divorcees hate divorce. Children of divorce hate divorce." That's it. Hold up the divine ideal. Don't apologize for it, but don't reject those who miss it, not in spirit or in deed. We must avoid a judgemental spirit. Of all armies, the Christian army should not shoot its own wounded.

The Principle of the Sacredness of Human Life

God fashioned life in the first place. He looked on it and pronounced it good. Wherever the Christian gospel has gone, it brought with it the good news that life is a sacred trust. It is not mine to do with it what I please. It is God's trust to me. To the degree I choose to do as he pleases, I am fulfilled and taste life to its fullest. Every life is sacred. The implication of this fact is that every life is of sacred value, whatever one's interpretation of when that human soul comes into being, whether at the "breath of life" (Genesis 2:7) or at conception. Abortion on demand cheapens that value of life and should be rejected. The idea that a

woman's body belongs to her and she can do with it what she will is unbiblical. No one's body belongs only to himself. We belong to the Lord Christ. I believe the idea that fetal life is identical with fully developed life is also unbiblical. Scripture does not treat a human-caused miscarriage as murder in the Mosaic law. I believe that Exodus 21:20-25 clearly makes that destruction of fetal life less offensive than manslaughter for which the cities of refuge offered the only hope to avoid execution or murder where no escape from execution was provided.

In upholding the sacredness of life and opposing the use of abortion for avoiding parenting children, there remain the victims. Talk to the medical doctor in a major hospital who says in anguished confidence, "Last month there were a nine-year old child and a ten-year old child here. Each of these little girls was pregnant, by incest, by one of their own family members." Hold up the sacredness of human life, but the victims should be spared. Babies should not be forced beyond their knowledge to bear babies for which they cannot care. Rape, incest, the life and health of the mother, we must have compassion and forgiveness where sin and human error have created chaos.

The Principle of the Sacredness of Parental Responsibility.

God places it squarely on the family. From Deuteronomy 6 through Ephesians 6, He reveals his plan for educating and training human lives. Children are to be guided toward God. They are to be nurtured in awe and admonition of God. The principle of sacred responsibility for the parent to fashion the mind and will of the child to bend before the mind and will of the Heavenly Father is clear. We need to proclaim it and equip ourselves and our people for meeting the challenge.

We must apply the principle with compassion also. In our complex society, every parent needs help. Other forces are strong; peer groups, media com-

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munication of alternate ideals, upheaval. Every pastor knows what it is to help parents deal, and sometimes to deal ourselves, with the anguish of failure as children rebel and move in directions opposite, either temporarily or permanently, from what they are taught. Some sense of awareness of the responsibility of the child for himself before God, and of the forgiveness of God for failure, combine to produce an awareness of limited liability for parents. There are some limitations in human experience in which one cannot be totally responsible for another. They must be left to God and face the responsibility before him for themselves. The grace of God should be communicated by the spiritual family to the heartsore and weary who walk that painful road.

Impacting the Educational Processes of Our American Society

We face the challenge of strengthening the families of our nation in an age in which the educational processes of a complex urban society are being severely tested. Our task is to rescue those processes for moral and ethical idealism in tune with the revelation of God's intention for his world. As families fail to function in their basic spiritual educational role, we begin to look desperately for other resources. The schools seem to be the logical places to look. After all, the children are exposed to training opportunities there for thirty-five hours a week. Thus the school systems have become a battle ground in America. Private parochial schools were once thought the strategy for the Roman Catholic church and a few other church bodies. Now a vast array of evangelical schools are being formed. While some are obviously fashioned to perpetuate some form of racial exclusion, many are being formed out of other anxieties and concerns for moral training.

I want to reaffirm my conviction that withdrawal from the public schools of the children of our strongest Christian families and of the finest of Christian teachers or administrators is a basic mistake of strategy for the Christian com-

munity. It has potentially divisive effects on the society as a whole as the Northern Ireland experience demonstrates. I speak here to the issue of Christian strategy. Withdrawal is the opposite of becoming salt of the earth or light of the world. It leaves the public school systems abandoned to non-Christians, the poverty stricken, and a few stubborn and embattled believers. Christian parents ought to be encouraged to become active participants as patrons of public schools seeking in every way possible to rescue them from the plight of confusion and economic disaster into which many are falling.

As a product of an inner city public school which did not devotionalize me in formal ways each day, I testify to the power of the lived-out witness of Christian teachers who were dedicated to their tasks. What I am calling for is not for formal, required prayers in public schools but for more *prayer-ers* to be in the public schools of America. I think of Miss Lourania Miller. She was an old woman in that inner city school laboring away teaching Latin when I sat in her class. She was a demon of discipline and demand. I went to complain about the extra load she placed on me. She said, "Jimmy, I understand you're going to be a preacher . . . a Baptist preacher. I happen to be a Baptist and I am so tired of hearing ignorant Baptist preaching, I'm determined that you know Latin and early Roman history before you get out of here." That woman didn't lead me in prayer, but she came to school an hour early every morning for a year to teach me Greek. She led me in life. Faith is caught as well as taught. The thrill of my young pastoral life was the one time she journeyed fifty miles to hear me preach in my own pulpit. We must take seriously the challenge of public education in this country.

The greatest classroom in America for families and children is not the school room. It is the living room or den where the television set is. Television is the greatest teaching tool in the history of humanity. No one has studied its impact with any more thoroughness over any longer period of time than the Annenberg School of Communications of the University of Pennsylvania. They have the "longest running and so far still only

continuous and cumulative research" on what it means to live with TV at the national average of thirty viewing hours a week (more for children). George Gerbner, dean of that school, calls it "a universal curriculum—into which children are born and in which people live from cradle to grave." Few question the impact of that medium in forming our decisions about values, economic and political choices, and even our way of perceiving life. It is a powerful educational tool which has produced a great deal of good in our society. Gerbner claims it has "abolished provincialism and parochialism, reduced loneliness and isolation, enriched cultural horizons of the poorest segments of our society, and has given us a means for educating and governing masses of people."

We probably would not have faced up to the challenge of the civil rights revolution without it. On the other hand, the erosion of sexual ideals, the trivialization of life, the growing of greed and materialism, and the glorification of violence also grow in the seedbed of the mind with new energy because of television.

The technological explosion, plus the opening up of new low power television service in the country along with cable systems and satellites, makes a whole new impact for family values possible. It also releases a new access for a flood of filth and pornography. It creates new tensions and can accelerate our loss of discipline in the permissive atmosphere of our society, or it can provide for the most inspiring and educational experiences imaginable. We are committed as Southern Baptists to putting television access into the hands of local churches and building a channel you can trust in this country. We are not alone in this effort. Others will be alongside us. All of us are needed to stem the tide and change the flow of what is happening to the family in the current atmosphere of television communication.

Enriching Families in Faith

It has long been a shibboleth of Southern Baptist life that the local church is pivotal in the kingdom of God. May I move it past the usual slogan into as strong a conviction as I can communicate

with you. For all its flaws and warts, its problems and perplexities, *the local church is still the center stage in the drama of recovering family, not the schools not the television set, not the voting booth, not the legislative hall, but the local church life in this nation.*

As a pastor, I found the highest fulfillment of my spiritual journey in the multiplicity of roles to be played out in the local church challenge. The extended fellowship of Southern Baptist churches is working diligently to equip local churches for the exciting challenge of strengthening families. It is happening already in a myriad of ways. Some of you here are responsible for it. You have fashioned family enrichment retreats, family fellowship opportunities, parenting seminars, a Bible study curriculum centered in family needs. Just as those of us in the ACTS television network are dedicated to programming for every age in the family circle as well as for life enrichment within the family relationship, so the Sunday School Board's Family Life Department is providing materials.

This seminar speaks to our concern through the Christian Life Commission. Family ministries are being carried out through home missionaries, seminaries, colleges and youth programs. Family life resources in counseling centers have sprung up all over the nation under local churches or groups of churches. Pastors with an eye for where Christians are going to choose to worship have discovered that a majority of them are choosing the place where they will find help, enrichment, spiritual growth, and fulfillment for their families. Single adult ministries and ministries to the aging are growing in great velocity.

In Conclusion

I started with the stark reality of the struggle for the family to survive and the painful fact of the deaths of so many marriages. May I close with the joyous reminder that Jesus is alive. His Holy Spirit is at work strengthening and enriching and empowering lives and families. We remember the failures.

They are painful wounds in our spirits as we struggle to pastor and help the healing process. But the fantastic fact is the number of marriages that are NOT sick, the number of families that ARE functioning, the amount of love that IS flowing in churches and in families. To watch a family in the flush of success and fulfillment and to realize that God has graced you with the opportunity to join in their joy is to yearn for every human being in the world to know Jesus. This is our task, our challenge, and he says he will be with us in it even to the End of the Age.

¹Martin E. Marty, *Context* (March 1, 1982).

Dr. Jimmy R. Allen is President of the Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is former President of the Southern Baptist Convention. This address was delivered at The Christian Life Commission National Seminar on "Strengthening Families" in Atlanta, Georgia, March 22-24, 1982.

Nuclear Doomsday: Four Minutes to Midnight?

by Ronald D. Sisk

In *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* the hands of the Doomsday Clock move closer to midnight. Periodically the publishers of the *Bulletin* set the clock forward or back to reflect their view of the nearness of nuclear war. This year they set the hands at four minutes to midnight. They believe nuclear war is very near. They are not alone. Sixty-three percent of Americans polled in a recent survey believe the United States may be involved in a nuclear war in the near future.¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff have predicted a 50/50 chance of such a war before 1985.

The governments of the United States and the Soviet Union are preparing to fight a nuclear war. Both sides are spending billions of dollars to increase the size and sophistication of their nuclear stockpiles. Each side blames the other for the necessity of such a buildup. Both proclaim their willingness to negotiate. Yet meaningful negotiations have yet to

take place.

Christians ask themselves whether nuclear war will happen and what effect it would have on themselves, on their families, and on the world.

Supportive Evidence

Competent authorities are now saying that nuclear war is probable. It is probable now, and it grows more probable day by day. There are several reasons.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union have tremendous, growing nuclear arsenals. Numbers alone make it more difficult to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. There is not one person with a finger on the nuclear button. There are literally thousands. *Time* magazine has reported that, in 1977, 4,973 persons were removed from access to nuclear weapons management positions for such problems as alcohol and drug abuse and various personality disorders. The danger of unau-

thorized or accidental launch of a nuclear weapon is clear and present.

Each side is attempting to build weapons which are more accurate, less detectable, and more capable of surviving an attack than the other's. The new American "cruise" missiles are so small that they cannot be seen by spy satellites and fly so low that they cannot be detected by Soviet radar. Deployment of such weapons would increase nuclear tension by increasing Soviet fears of an American first strike. The more capable we grow of destroying the Soviet Union with a first strike, the more tempted they would seem likely to be to strike first at us. Such a vicious circle of increasing tensions makes nuclear war more likely day by day.

Increasing numbers of other nations have nuclear capabilities. France, Britain, China, and India have all exploded nuclear weapons. Israel may have done so. At least a dozen more

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nations could have the bomb by 1984. Nuclear proliferation makes it increasingly likely that the United States and the Soviet Union may be drawn into a nuclear conflict begun by somebody else. The spread of nuclear knowledge also makes it more likely that the initiator of nuclear war will be a terrorist, a petty demagogue, or an international outlaw shaping events toward some twisted end.

The danger of war by miscalculation is growing as well. American nuclear forces went on alert for a full six minutes recently when a technician accidentally inserted a training tape of a Soviet attack into the computer defense system. There were 151 false alarms in an 18-month period. With the available decision time at less than thirty minutes, each side is under tremendous pressure to use nuclear weapons in a situation of doubt. The increasing sophistication of weapons and the consequent shortening of warning time are pushing strategists toward a "launch on warning" policy. The less time there is to decide, the greater the danger that the decision will be to retaliate.

Likely Effects

Given then that a nuclear war is becoming more probable every day, what are the likely effects such an event would have on everyday life? Generally speaking, those effects would be threefold.

Hundreds of millions of people would die. If the Soviet Union, which has 10,000 megatons of weapons (a megaton is equivalent to the explosive power of a million tons of TNT) were to drop only 300 medium size (one megaton) bombs on key population centers in the United States, they could kill 50 percent of the American people and have 97 percent of their nuclear capability left over.² The most likely effect of a nuclear war is that you and your family would die—either immediately in the blast or within a few weeks from deadly radiation.

American society, Russian society, and European society would be devastated. Even if a substantial portion of the population were to be

survive—with the major cities, medical centers, business concerns, and transportation and communications networks all vaporized or made lethally radioactive—the United States, Russia, and Europe would almost certainly cease to exist as functioning national communities. Those groups who did survive would face disease, famine, cold, almost complete breakdown of transportation, the failure of energy supplies, and the collapse of all government functions including the provision of water and the collection of garbage. In such a world, the emotional and psychological impact on the survivors would be incalculable. Whether they could ever rally and rebuild their societies in the long run cannot be predicted in advance.

The environment would be damaged, perhaps beyond recovery. Vast areas would be contaminated by radiation so intense that no humans could live there, especially in those instances where a nuclear bomb destroyed a nuclear power facility, of which the United States now has over seventy. The radiation debris from nuclear power plants would be as intense and more long lasting than even that from nuclear weapons. Because animals and plants are subject to radiation poisoning too, it must be expected that whole species would be completely wiped out. One author has suggested that, because of their survival abilities, the United States would become "a republic of insects and grass."³

In addition, the ozone layer which protects human beings, plants, and animals from the sun's burning ultraviolet rays would be depleted. A large-scale nuclear attack would be expected to make it impossible for people, even if some survived the initial attack, to be outside more than a few minutes at a time for many years afterward. Precise environmental effects cannot be predicted with certainty. There is a possibility, however, that a large-scale nuclear attack would cause such serious destruction of the environment that no human life on this planet could any longer be sustained.

The argument that better civil defense measures would enable a substantial number of people to survive breaks down at two related points. Those in shelters close to the blasts would suffocate as their oxygen was consumed or be

roasted to death by the heat. Those who did survive might emerge to discover a devastated world in which long-term survival would be impossible.

Serious students generally agree that a nuclear war would mean doomsday. The world as we know it in twentieth century America would simply cease to exist.

Winning the Race?

The next question, of course, is, "If nuclear war would be so terrible, why do we keep building nuclear weapons?" Through the 1960s the United States maintained nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. Rapid expansion of Soviet forces brought them within reach of American strength which then set off a new round of American expansion. Today the two countries are about equal in total capability. The Soviets have more missiles, but the United States has more warheads. Each nation has more than enough nuclear power to destroy the other many times over. Each has the capacity to wipe out life on this planet. Neither can adequately defend itself against the weapons of the other. Even if the Soviet Union destroyed all our land-based weapons in a first strike, our nuclear submarines would still be able to wipe them off the face of the earth.

In the context of that situation, the current arms race is the attempt by each side to gain some concrete advantage over the other. The United States, in addition to building the "cruise" missiles which cannot be detected by Soviet radar, is looking for ways to hide the MX missile, or make them mobile so that the Soviets cannot destroy them before they can be launched. An enlarging nuclear submarine fleet gives us easily hidden, mobile bases from which to launch our missiles. The Soviets are similarly active.

The more sophisticated and capable the other side becomes, the more our leaders become determined to improve our capabilities. And the more our capabilities improve, the more their leaders are spurred to develop their forces. The arms race long ago became a deadly game of "one-upmanship" which has lost any relationship to the legitimate defense needs of either side. Because each side can already destroy

the other many times over, neither side needs even one more bomb or missile. Yet, so far neither side has been willing to stop the costly and deadly proliferation.

A Christian Response

Despite the clear and present danger presented by nuclear weapons, there are persistent obstacles to a Christian commitment to working for peace and avoiding nuclear war. The first major obstacle is a lack of faith. Having lived in the nuclear age for nearly forty years, most of us simply do not think about the danger which nuclear weapons pose. We do not want to think about it. The prospect of nuclear war is too frightening, and we feel helpless to make any difference in the face of so awful and powerful an evil.

Scripture teaches, however, that true power comes from God and can be used to accomplish his purposes (Psalms 21:13, 147:5; John 10:11). Indeed, we are directly responsible to God for the way we use the power which he has given us to do his will (Genesis 1:25-26; Psalm 8:5-8). To fail to believe that God can work through us for the redemption of his world; it is to fail to believe that anything can be done; it is to disbelieve God and to mistrust the power of his redeeming love for us in Jesus Christ.

A second major obstacle to a Christian commitment to working for the avoidance of nuclear war is militarism and the powerful military machine with its army of lobbyists and its legions of proponents with vested interests. Many Christians believe quite honestly that the proper response to the Soviet nuclear threat is the very nuclear buildup in which our country is now engaged. They believe that as a democratic, free nation, we have a responsibility to arm ourselves with nuclear arms, the most deadly weapons available. As non-pacifists, most Southern Baptists believe that a nation has the right and the responsibility to go to war when necessary to serve the cause of justice. We understand that Scripture upholds justice as an ideal to be cherished.

Yet traditional Christian "just war" theory teaches that weapons may only be used justly in any situation by being directed at the enemy's military forces or installations. Use of force against civilian,

noncombatant personnel or installations, at least until Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has historically been regarded as inherently unjust. Just war theory argues that those who cannot defend themselves must not be attacked. Existing nuclear weapons, however, cannot be used without destroying civilian populations. The actual use of nuclear weapons would therefore be unjust by definition. To rely on nuclear weapons for national defense, those who oppose them agree, is to abdicate our responsibility before God to be just, even in the act of national defense.

The Bible teaches that military might is no guarantee of safety or of justice. "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord" (Isaiah 31:1, RSV). National reliance on weapons of war produces false security. In the case of nuclear weapons, their sheer numbers and destructive power have created a situation in which the search for security has produced ever-increasing insecurity.

Just as the use of nuclear weapons against a political enemy's civilian population would be a denial of elementary human rights and the basic tenets of justice, so trust in the power of nuclear weapons for safety is a particularly deadly form of idolatry. In order to develop a Christian response to the threat of nuclear war, we must first repent of our own ill-advised worship of nuclear power and of our own callous willingness to destroy today's political enemies, together with women and children, at any cost.

Once past the obstacles of a lack of faith in the possibility of action and the fundamental militarism of today's societies, it is possible to begin to develop a Christian response to the nuclear dilemma. The crucial nature of the issue dictates that such a response be both Bible-based and specific. What can you do?

Accept responsibility as a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9). Recognize that any government, including our own, is wrong and is headed for ruin when it does the things which make for war. As Christians, we are responsible for

doing "the things which make for peace" (Romans 14:19, KJV) and for being good citizens (Romans 13). Yet the same government which Paul viewed as good in Romans 13 was considered as evil by John in Revelation 13 when it opposed the purposes of God. As good Christian citizens, we would do well to follow the traditional American saying, "My country, right or wrong; when right, to keep it right; when wrong, to make it right." In a world of imminent nuclear peril, it is our responsibility as concerned Christian citizens to oppose the indefensible expansion of nuclear arsenals.

That does not mean, of course, that all Christians must now become pacifists. Nations have a legitimate right of self-defense. When justice is served, most Christians believe that they may legitimately participate in war. The point is that nuclear weapons are now so unspeakably terrible in their destructive power that use of them can never be justified.

Educate yourself on nuclear arms issues and what they mean for the arms race as a whole. Most such issues may be understood without special technical knowledge. Inform yourself as to whether the use of a particular weapons system makes for more or less stability and security. Check your information sources to see how they might be biased. Paul prayed that the love of the Philippian church might abound "with knowledge and all discernment" (Philippians 1:9, RSV). Discernment is a gift of the Spirit and comes with experience. Knowledge must be acquired for ourselves. In the matter of nuclear arms, it is vital that you get the facts and learn to relate those facts to the larger context of nuclear war.

Recognize that the arms race itself has serious consequences for our society even if the weapons are never used. President Eisenhower said, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed." The concentration on military expenditures which the current arms race mandates necessarily diverts resources which could be used to meet urgent economic development and

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human needs. Matthew 25 reminds us that we will be judged for the human needs we meet or fail to meet. The nuclear arms race should be viewed in the full context of all the available facts.

Become an activist. The policies and programs which are propelling us toward nuclear war cannot be changed without concerted citizen action.

Work through the Christian Life Committee in your church—establish such a committee if you do not already have one—to provide members with information on the arms race and its consequences. Initiate a letter writing campaign to encourage your representative and senators to take stands on specific issues. Talk with them when they are home from Washington or write their staff representatives. Be certain that your efforts are consistent and nonpartisan.

Press for a bilateral freeze on the construction and deployment of nuclear weapons. Numerous church, professional, and scientific groups have urgently called for such a freeze. Over one hundred members of congress have endorsed the idea. One hundred and sixty-one town meetings in Vermont did so in March 1982. Such a freeze would have advantages for both sides.

It would reduce fear. The United States cannot be expected to embrace nuclear arms limitation if the Soviet Union does not do so at the same time, and vice versa. We must remember that they lost 20 million of their citizens to Hitler's armies in World War II and that many of the battles occurred on Soviet soil. A bilateral freeze would be a gesture of good faith, reducing their fear of us as well as ours of them.

It would be simple. Construction and deployment of nuclear weapons would simply stop at an agreed upon time. They could be ahead in some areas. We would be ahead in others. Neither side would be in real danger because each already has more than adequate power to deter aggression by the other.

It would be easily verifiable. Each side could determine whether the other was living up to its side of the agreement by using current satellite technology. The first step toward eventual elimination of

nuclear arms could be a bilateral freeze on their current construction and deployment.

Support continuous, comprehensive arms reduction talks with the Soviets. Stopping the nuclear arms race is too vital a topic to link it with our feelings about Soviet actions in other areas. Of course, we disapprove of their policies in countries such as Afghanistan and Poland. Talks do not mean that we trust them or that they trust us. Every agreement would have to be verifiable. Yet our very proper concern about Soviet adventurism makes it even more important that we continue talking in order to defuse a possible nuclear confrontation. As long as we talk, the possibility exists that a nuclear holocaust may be avoided through mutual arms reduction. If we fail to talk, the chances increase that one side or the other will one day use the weapons it has prepared.

Pray without ceasing. In the final analysis, the awesome evils of nuclear war cannot be avoided without bringing to bear on our desperately needy human situation the power of Almighty God. But war can be avoided by calling upon him and by giving ourselves to the doing of his will. "With God," Jesus said, "all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, RSV). With his help we may yet prevent the fiery nuclear doomsday stored up for us in Soviet and American silos, submarines, and bomb bays. With his help we may yet stop the hands of the Doomsday Clock from ticking away the last moments of human life on this earth. But hurry. It may be four minutes to midnight.

FOOTNOTES

¹Time magazine survey (December, 1981).

²Jonathan Schell, "Reflections (Nuclear Arms—Part 1)," *The New Yorker* (February 1, 1982), p. 86.

³Ibid, p. 90. See also *The Effects of Nuclear War*, Office of Technology Assessment, Congress of the United States, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Ronald D. Sisk is Director of Program Development for the Christian Life Commission. His article is available as a pamphlet in the *Critical Issues* series entitled "Nuclear Doomsday" for 15¢ per copy.

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