

LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

May-June 1982



Former President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter received the 1982 Distinguished Service Awards from the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission during the agency's national seminar in Atlanta. Christian Life Commission Executive Director Foy Valentine (second from right) presented the awards. Presiding at the session was Harry Hollis (right), director of family and special moral concerns for the Commission.

The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Presents to

JIMMY CARTER

The Distinguished Service Award for Leadership in Christian Social Ethics

In recognition of unique and outstanding contributions in applied Christianity as

- ... Committed Christian for whom Jesus Christ is Lord in all of life
- ... Faithful Baptist churchman
- ... Loyal son, husband, father, and grandfather whose strong personal family commitment has strengthened families throughout society
- ... Courageous champion of human rights
- ... Patient proponent of peace with justice
- ... Compassionate commoner
- ... Disciplined exemplar of character, courage, honesty, honor, work, wisdom, humility, and integrity
- ... Principled proponent of separation of church and state
- ... Model of a moral Presidency
- ... World leader of grace and vision
- ... Statesman of high principles on whom history is destined to smile

March 22, 1982

The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Presents to

ROSALYNN CARTER

The Distinguished Service Award for Leadership in Christian Social Ethics

In recognition of unique and outstanding contributions in applied Christianity as

- ... Committed Christian for whom Jesus Christ is Lord in all of life
- ... Consistent practitioner and effective advocate of strong family life
- ... Conscientious champion of responsible freedom for women
- ... Compassionate heroine of hope for the mentally ill, the aging, the hungry, the poor, and the needy
- ... Authentic proponent of a finely principled life style
- ... Faithful friend and perceptive marital partner in pursuit of enduring values and ideals
- ... Model First Lady
- ... Excellent example of the beautiful spirit of Christian womanhood at its best

March 22, 1982

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What Are We For?

A good friend jokingly but publically accused me of staying up nights thinking of new things for Baptists not to do. I plead, "Not guilty."

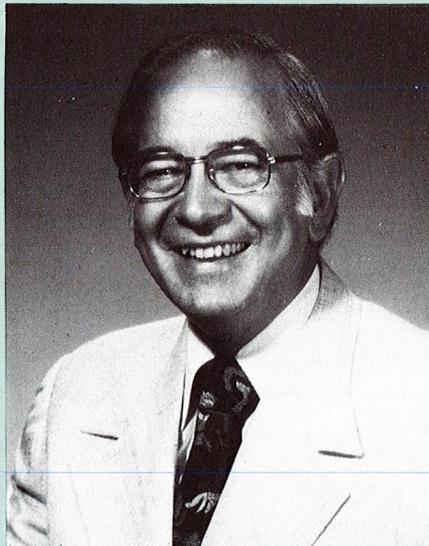
It is true, of course, that in the Christian Life Commission's work, as in the Ten Commandments, we sometimes state our case negatively. We are against racism. We are against family breakdown. We are against sexual immorality. We are against alcohol. We are against drunk driving. We are against war. We are against injustice. We are against hunger. We are against union of church and state. We are against male chauvinism. We are against civil religion. And on and on we could go. We often do.

But what are we for?

That is a proper question.

We are pro morality. This word morality comes from the Latin *mores* meaning habit, custom, disposition, manner of life. It is the equivalent of ethics which comes from the Greek *ethos* which also means habit, custom, disposition, manner of life. Christian morality has to do with the believer's manner of life. It has to do with living all of life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It has to do with character, integrity, honesty, responsibility, stewardship, wholeness, holiness. Christian morality development is the sum and substance of the Christian Life Commission's special ordainment from Southern Baptists and, we believe, from God. We are for Christian morality.

We are pro family. The Christian Life Commission's initiatives in support of strengthened families include



personnel, pamphlets, books, lessons, articles, conferences, seminars, audio cassettes, video cassettes, and such cutting-edge activities as consultations related to a Christian understanding of sexuality and communicating moral values in the home. We are for families.

We are pro human rights. Our concern for human rights is based on the Bible teaching that humanity is made in the image of God, after his spiritual, rational, and moral likeness. This concern encompasses work to improve race relations, the rights of women, criminal justice, voting rights, and civil rights. The Christian Life Commission's Declaration of Human Rights, affirmed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1978, stands as a witness to this commitment. We are pro life, pro liberty, and pro the pursuit of happiness. We are for human rights.

We are pro Christian citizenship. We are for responsible involvement by any and all Christians in the political process. We believe that this

country's tried and proven two-party political system needs informed, committed, active political involvement on the part of the people of God in both political parties and at all political levels, not leaving the running of the country up to the wisdom of unbelievers.

We are for Christian citizenship.

We are pro work. The whole economic process receives major attention in the Bible and is of obvious concern to the Lord. Economic factors deeply affect every Christian and all the ongoing life and work of all the churches. God is a worker and his intention for humanity from the beginning has been that we should labor responsibly in his garden to till it and keep it in careful stewardship. We believe that human destiny is not economically determined, as Karl Marx mistakenly thought, but is economically affected so that Christians have no choice but to be for involvement in the economic process. We are for work.

We are pro living the Christian life. We are for righteousness as opposed to evil, peace as opposed to war, life as opposed to death, kindness as opposed to cruelty, involvement as opposed to withdrawal, honesty as opposed to duplicity, and love as opposed to hate. We are for living the Christian life.

We are for this short, magnificent, inclusive, profound, biblical affirmation, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Joy Valentine

Strengthening Families Through the Church

by Neal T. Jones

Picking Up the Trail

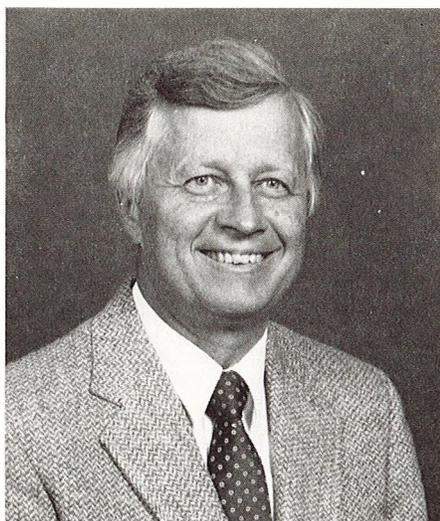
My boy Bud had an old dog called Schradie, and Schradie possessed a keen nose. Once he picked up the trail it was difficult to keep up with him or to deter him from his journey. Our church has picked up a warm trail and we are happy to share our pursuit—nowhere near complete. I will refrain from enumerating the sprained ankles and bashed skulls along the littered trail. Today we travel the scenic view.

The Bible from first to last is a book about family—from the opening trail of Adam and Eve to the concluding journey of John on Patmos. Adam and Eve were responsible for togetherness and its extension. John, in Revelation, separated from his Christian family, walked with his Lord in the midst of the symbols of family—the golden candlesticks. From first to last family is gold. Between the first and last trail of family stands Israel. Israel was a family of twelve brothers forever. Roots and relationships were established and maintained. Finally, the story of the Lord Jesus is the most important chapter on family. It is a record of family at different levels with the faith family taking precedence over the blood family.

Family is a reality. God happens to us as a Father, a Son, and a Spirit—the reflection of his own togetherness. Mankind is in this image. The male and female blend, bend, and glue together. In family we are on the trail of ultimate meaning. The trail intensifies in the church. The church is a bride, a body, a community, and a family.

Facing the Right Direction

It was equally evident as we picked up the trail of Christian family that we were crisscrossing back and forth



Neal T. Jones

across a plain trail, following it in zigzag fashion. We were attempting to claim the Father while granting minor attention to his family. The truth prevailed—we could not have the Father without his family. We were promoting individualistic experiences, but family happened accidentally. Our major effort was directed to worship and Bible study. Family was accidental rather than purposeful.

Facing in this direction we began to think of church as a dynamic synergism consisting of worship, fellowship, and ministry (worship includes what we term Bible study and teaching). We put these ingredients together as a woman builds a cake. Each condiment became stronger as it related properly to the others. The whole is strengthened by healthy parts. The parts affect the whole and the whole affects the parts. The blend has to be changed as the family changes. Since there are many cooks affecting the blend, the process is delicate. Family at any level of thinking is not a quick fix.

Running for Daylight

As a church we began to run for daylight. We followed no five or ten-

year plan, only a trail. Our style is akin to the spinoffs in the Book of Acts. As times and circumstances changed, the Spirit thrust the believers in new directions. Too many things fail because they are overstated on paper without vital connection with events and opinions of participants. If we could have outlined all that has happened in these years we would have spoiled the process and lost our way in the impossibilities. This is the way Philip moved to Samaria, Peter to Cornelius, and Barnabas and Paul to the world. As a glaring need presents itself we address it with the resources we have. I will enumerate some of these darts toward daylight.

1. Knowing the church family. In the beginning of this ministry I met with the families of our church in groups of three or four families. Most of these meetings were held in the church parlor. This consumed most week nights for a period of three months. Since my family was still in Texas, I could meet this schedule. I cannot remember how many attended these sessions but there were enough to improve acquaintance. You have to know family to lead family.

2. Family ministry plan. The family ministry plan of our deacons was already in progress. It was applauded and strengthened. The deacons have been expanded to over a hundred so the family load is manageable. We have moved from a board concept to a servant mentality. Each month I address these fellow ministers with messages related to fellowship, family, worship, and ministry. The deacon servants are the most important ministers of our church. They consider their church an organism first and then an organization. The priorities list fellowship before business. If we do not have family, we do not need organization. The church committees are formed by the deacons but they

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... Families

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function without their constant attention unless there is a fellowship problem. This system is far from perfect but a long way from the smoke-filled directors' room resembling a poor man's General Motors. The inclusion of women deacons has greatly aided in the entire process.

3. The staff practices family. The staff practices family and models it for the church. Seven of the ministerial staff are men and two are women. Currently one laywoman and layman are unordained while six men and one woman are ordained.

I cannot for the life of me tell you what style of leadership our staff exercises. It is not democracy nor autocracy; it is like family. There are times when I make unpleasant decisions unilaterally. There are far more times when the decisions are a matter of consensus. Creativity, cooperation, and compassion are evident. There is a conscious effort to carry and be carried by each other across rough places. Pleasant and unpleasant staff behavior has reflected family in affirmation, correction, and improvement. Hours of pain and pleasure are herein consumed. Increasingly, a great part of our time is spent with each other. The whole process of family rises or falls here. I feel this is a large part of our success.

4. Day Care. Child care is more than eight hours of love and instruction to children. Parents are carefully interviewed by Mrs. Engels with more in mind than allergies, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies. These interviews are followed by periodic expressions of concern in formal and informal settings. Our teachers constitute family ministers. The teachers and the director meet with the families of each class in a discovery meeting. This is followed by more purposeful contacts of the teacher and the parent.

“Pastoring strangers is not an adequate arrangement. People in cities resemble what one sociologist called ‘dust heaps without sufficient links to each other.’”

About 25% of our enrollment each year is unchurched. Carefully we cultivate these friends and aim at participation in our church. When they are sick or in need of a minister the staff assists. Dr. Mary Brown Rogers is an excellent child psychiatrist. She gives her time to children and families of the church as Sunday School teachers give their time. Parents have access to Dr. Dale Keeton, our counselor. Special testing is provided for children where problems are noticed. Parents and children involved in abuse are aided. Death and divorce call forth responses from the church. Special classes are arranged for children with special problems. Conversion and incorporation into our church family have occurred regularly.

In the summer child care is expanded for children up to the sixth grade. This day camp activity is staffed by college interns from our congregation. They are trained for this purpose and paid by the fees of the parents. This participation by returning college students is an aid to maintaining church family ties. For years we have had a waiting list of 140 children in our program. We are considering enlargement. The suburban wave of growth passed us long ago, but this ministry has kept us from being a group of older adults.

5. Counseling ministry. In the '60s a distraught husband called me for an emergency family meeting. He showed up with both of his wives. This triggered my decision to press for a specialist in counseling. Soon we established a partnership with Dr. Dale Keeton. I mention him at this time because for ten years he has been the centerpiece of our family consideration. In our area Baptists are sometimes considered a Southern Cult of Scalpers looking for Yankees to count as converts. This obvious

interest in people and families has affected our image and ministry.

6. Retreat Center. Urban congregations are sometimes many steps from family and are very close to a parent-teacher association type operation. Pastoring strangers is not an adequate arrangement. People in cities resemble what one sociologist called “dust heaps without sufficient links to each other.” Bonhoeffer correctly says in *Life Together*:

It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. At the end all his disciples deserted him. On the Cross he was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers. For this cause he had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. . . what is an unspeakable gift of God for the lonely individual is easily disregarded and trodden under foot by those who have the gift every day. It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.¹

Conscious of the necessity of fellowship, our church purchased eighty acres in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia close to the border of West Virginia, the state that calls itself “almost heaven.” In time we

have added a prize-winning lodge and the necessary leisure activities for a camping program. A caretaker and cook care for our retreat center year round. Most weekends are taken with retreats of from ten to fifty people plus camps in the summer. All retreats have a bearing on family and some are specifically arranged with the family in mind.

7. Eating meetings. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' home and arranged for eating meetings consisting of from twelve to five thousand. It is no accident he was called the wine-bibber and could have been called the caterer. The early church meeting in homes added to the connection of food and fellowship. Corinth incorporated the Lord's Supper with a love feast. Our church promotes a whole series of eating meetings. These take place on weekdays and on Sundays after all three worship services. A new members luncheon is a time to meet and hear from all the family of new

of worship or we get lost. In the evenings you may not need it.

On Wednesday evenings we feature prayer around the dinner table and children learn to pray with their parents. Many sick folk receive cards from little children who prayed for them on Wednesday evening. Every family is encouraged to send a card to someone they prayed for on Wednesday evening.

9. Emphasis on missions. The large meetings of our Woman's Missionary Union ceased long ago. Our ladies overtly, deliberately became catalysts to foster mission activity among the auxiliaries and the families of the church. The Woman's Missionary Union attendance is on a plateau while mission activity is on an all-time high. This year we will give through our Cooperative Program \$200,000 to mission work.

A special program organization under the guidance of minister Art Herron plots the strategy of our local mission activities. We have moved

on Wednesday and Thursday and by appointment, utilizing our buses to transport these people to the church. This program is under the leadership of Ann Fry, a wonderful laywoman in our church. Some churches are going out of the bus business but we would like to expand it for this group and the elderly. We have an International Sunday School Class with nine enrolled. There is a Korean worship service and a Spanish worship service. We seek to make these a part of the larger family as opposed to groups using our facilities. We are not against separate congregations but it is our desire to be family. We have Spanish deacons. We seek to enlist internationals in the integrated activities. This is difficult but rewarding.

Our ministry to the needy furnishes clothes, furniture, food, job help, citizenship classes, and educational opportunities to many. We have greatly increased our gifts in this matter. An anonymous member of our church set up a foundation which helps us some in this.

We have assisted our Association in the call and appointment of two language ministers to the Vietnamese and the Spanish.

We are hopelessly behind but thrilled with our results. Our plan is to have an international minister on our staff. A month or so ago we featured a Sunday evening service interviewing a variety of internationals from South America, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Africa. We had nineteen nationalities present. We sang and spoke in more than one language. Currently we are installing a few translation boxes in our balcony. Recognizing the great difficulties involved, we are praying for a heterogeneous family. We regret that some churches are not open to internationals until the white population can no longer survive without them. We are leading from our strength.

11. Christian mediation service. We are beginning a Christian mediation service under the leadership of the young lawyer Claude Rhea, III, son of a prominent Southern Baptist

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“Recognizing the great difficulties involved, we are praying for a heterogeneous family. We regret that some churches are not open to internationals until the white population can no longer survive without them.”

members. Each luncheon takes on its own unique pattern dictated by the sentiment of the participants.

8. Worship. On Sunday mornings we worship the Father with a structured order of worship. In the evenings we celebrate the family and anything goes. Sunday evenings are exciting services often featuring a variety of interviews. Struggling alcoholics, emerging Christians, internationals, children, youth, clowns, and a variety of people are interviewed. Some Sunday evenings the service is for children. Small preschool children mob the pastor on the platform as he sits on the floor and dramatizes a story of Samuel or Moses. The variety of choirs fits this naturally.

In the mornings we follow the order

from one large trip by the youth choir to a proliferation of mission trips featuring various talents and goals. Carpenters, woodcutters, clowns, basketball teams, musical groups, bicyclists, and beachcombers have gone to places such as Canada, England, Ocean City, Vermont, Maine, a highrise for elderly people in Pennsylvania, and the Appalachian Mountains. In this area we are on the verge of great opportunities in family ministry.

10. Internationals. For Columbia family ministry means interest in international families. We have sponsored three families as a church. One of our members sponsored a family of eighteen on his own and is considering helping another family. We teach English to sixty-six people

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singer. He is in the process of organizing lawyers and resources in our church to assist in family differences. This is in keeping with Paul's words in I Corinthians 6.

12. On-the-Street Ministry.

Another young lawyer, Robert Ketchand, came to us from the South Main Church in Houston where he was active in the On-the-Street ministry for families of prisoners. This group meets for prayer and Bible study and fellowship with families of prisoners. It is in its beginning stages, and we have great hope for it. Recently a shower was held for a prospective mother in the group. The father is in jail. As the word spreads and the ministry helps we anticipate broad participation.

13. Alcoholics. The father of a family was converted, aided during the breakup of his marriage, strengthened in his life, and enlisted to minister to alcoholics. He leads us in courses to understand alcoholics. He chairs the AA group and sponsors movies and activities for alcoholics. Gradually some of our alcoholics are coming out of the closet. They currently have fifteen in attendance.

14. Singles. We are ending our first year with a minister of singles,

"We want to go beyond worship and dinner to the real meaning of family for these people who are in a strange land."

Barbara McNeir. A great effort has been made to integrate singles into the larger family. Some attend Sunday School at 8:30, teach at 9:45 in the second Sunday School, and worship at 11:00. They engage in care groups during the week and make great use of our retreat center on weekends. The care groups are a vital part of extended family.

15. Operation Friendship. We are located at the center of the world. I sometimes think Baptists are stronger in the capitals of Brazil and Kenya than they are here. Operation Friendship is an effort to extend friendship to the diplomatic community and to visitors from afar. Ambassadors have been entertained in our home and given books written and autographed by members of the church, *Born Again* by Charles Colson, *Mother's Medicine* by Nancy Thurmond, and *Rosalynn Carter* coauthored by Linda Maddox. We entertain them and thank them for their kindness to our missionaries in their nation.

This is followed by a worship service in which the diplomatic community is invited to a church service and dinner. As many as sixty or seventy have shown up. The flag is presented, and a special prayer is spoken for their

nation. A very informal "dinner on the ground" follows. There is an intermingling of our people with their people and the hope of continued friendship and contact. People speak spontaneously in testimonies at this meeting. It is an exhilarating family atmosphere.

A black cultural attache attended one Sunday with his delegation. The following night he awoke to the spectre of a cross burning in his yard. Our members have befriended him. He has eaten in our homes and some of our folk have eaten in his. Remarkable things are happening.

Our hope is that we can finance this ministry in order to increase our participation and follow up on significant opportunities. We want to go beyond worship and dinner to the real meaning of family for these people who are in a strange land.

¹*Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 17 and 20.

Neal T. Jones is pastor of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Virginia. This address was presented at the Christian Life Commission National Seminar on "Strengthening Families" March 22-24, 1982 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Helping Changed People Change the World . . .

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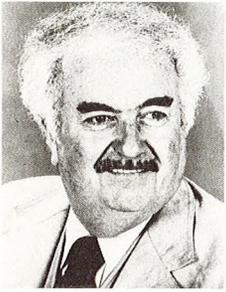
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Quotes from Strengthening Families Seminar



Keeshan



Mace



Mondale



Lawson



Oates



Sample

Robert Keeshan

Television's "Captain Kangaroo"

One of the most serious problems with the subject of children and television today is that it arouses such emotion in people. I am not sure why, but I suspect it has less to do with television and more to do with other aspects of how society treats children and the effects of such treatment. Television is very, very visible and a rather simple and direct way to account for failings in our treatment of children. When people are not blaming television for the failing of young people, they are indicting the schools and the courts and the police and the church. Very rarely is mention made of those charged with the direct responsibility for the raising of children, a group known as parents.

David R. Mace

Director of Marriage Enrichment
North Carolina Baptist Hospital

For the first time in human history, we are giving full recognition to the personhood of women. A revolution of such dimensions will inevitably take a full century to complete. But it is now well on its way; and I think nothing can now possibly reverse it. In fact, I think it is likely that when historians of the future refer back to the twentieth century, they will see this as the most significant event that took place. . . .

Walter Mondale

Former Vice President of the U.S.

I was blessed as a child to be reared in a Christian family and as an adult to be, with Joan and our children, a part of a Christian family today. What great strength and joy this has been for me all of my life. . . . My faith has motivated my fight for a more humane nation and world, and I'm proud of it. I said I believe in serving humanity. I did not say that I am a secular humanist, because I am not. It is because I am a Christian that I believe in serving humanity. The Christian faith I learned and practice today is based on God's rule that the greatest of all values is

love, not hate or suspicion or meanness. According to Paul's most famous admonition in I Corinthians, "there are three things that last: faith, hope and love and the greatest of these is love." I truly believe because I'm a Christian that we are our brothers' keepers.

Bill Lawson, Pastor

Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church
Houston, Texas

A positive role-model is effective in combating prejudice. What the children see and hear determines what the children will think and do. The most essential factor in shaping attitudes is the example set by the elders in the family. When Jesus Christ is exemplified as One who accepted Jew and Gentile, aristocrat and outcast, respected and reprobate, and the children see an echo of that spirit in the parents and other elders, prejudice will move toward obsolescence.

Wayne E. Oates

Professor of Psychiatry
University of Louisville, Ky.
School of Medicine

Marriage is a mutual commitment to learn from each other. Marriage grows, flowers, and bears fruit when each appoints the other as his or her most important teacher among human beings. . . . We call it being able to "get through to each other." When either partner closes his or her mind to the other, the marriage begins to wither and die.

Dorothy Sample

President
Woman's Missionary Union

The contemporary Christian woman has a responsibility to look at herself and to quit allowing circumstances and persons and situations outside herself to determine who she is. She must look within and say, "What do I do well? What do I like to do? What gifts has God placed within me?"

Some Suggestions for Dealing with the Secular Humanism Phenomenon

Secular humanism is a vital force in the contemporary world. It is now under unwarranted and intemperate attack from various quarters.¹

—Paul Kurtz

A Secular Humanist Declaration

The fruit of a secular humanism, which theoretically exalts man apart from God, is to debase him or at best to depersonalize him.²

—T. B. Maston

The Christian, the Church, and Contemporary Problems

The battle over secular humanism, as reflected in these opposing quotations, is a matter of serious concern to all Southern Baptists. Turning this concern into positive and responsible action is complicated by the fact that the term “secular humanism” has taken on a variety of meanings. To those who have signed *A Secular Humanist Declaration*, this term is a badge to be worn with honor. To others it is an atheistic philosophy that seeks to block humans from the resources of God’s power. To some it is a symbol of education and scientific objectivity, while to others it is a code word representing a checklist of specific sins which plague society. Even the U.S. Supreme Court has acknowledged the presence of secular humanism by listing it in a footnote, though not in the body of the opinion, as a “non-theistic religion.”³

Not only is the situation complicated by unclear and conflicting uses of the term “secular humanism,” but it is also made more difficult by the entry into the battle of some who are actively working on behalf of their own

personal agendas and political programs.

Given the volatility of this issue and the wide variety of personalities who have jumped into the fray about it, some people equipped with the theological insights and educational training to be formidable opponents of secular humanism have tended to stay out of the conflict. That is unfortunate. Secular humanism ought to be opposed. It ought to be opposed, of course, for the right reasons and in the right manner if our opposition is to be effective.

Called by Christ to communicate the gospel to a troubled world, Christians must move beyond rhetoric about secular humanism to speak to the issues and the pains that have made this term well known and widely discussed. The reason this battle is such a volatile one is that there are deep hurts in our society and justifiable fears about the direction in which our culture is moving.

It is the purpose of this paper, therefore, to examine the nature of the secular humanism phenomenon and to present some specific ways that Southern Baptists can respond to this issue.

Definitions

In order to know how to deal with secular humanism, we must first look at some basic definitions of “humanism,” “secular humanism,” and “Christian humanism.”

“Secular humanism ought to be opposed. It ought to be opposed, of course, for the right reasons and in the right manner if our opposition is to be effective.”

1. Humanism. The word “humanism” is a general term that focuses on the dignity and worth of human beings. Humanism is defined in

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary as “a doctrine, set of attitudes, or way of life centered upon human interests or values.”⁴

There are many kinds of humanism, some secular and some religious. The dictionary makes this clear in indicating that there is one use of “humanism” that designates “a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism” and is often called “naturalistic humanism.”⁵ Another type of humanism is designated in this unabridged dictionary as religious humanism: “A philosophy advocating the self-fulfillment of man within the framework of Christian principles—called also Christian humanism.”⁶

The word “humanism” is also used to refer to interests that people have in the humanities which explains why many who are particularly devoted to the classics have been falsely branded as “secular humanists.”

Baptist philosopher Richard B. Cunningham has listed eight characteristics of humanism in general:

- (1) An emphasis on the dignity and worth of human beings and the equal moral value of individual persons,
- (2) A stress on the importance of this present life and of finding fulfillment in the here and now,
- (3) An emphasis on human responsibility,
- (4) A belief in human potential to influence the future toward a

better life for the human race,
(5) A belief in the power of human reason to solve human problems,

- (6) A philosophy that the supreme goals of life are to be defined in terms of what is good for the human family,
- (7) A determination to be humanitarian in concern for the good life and social justice, and
- (8) A moral focus on persons that affirms cultural pluralism and resists imposing any one special behavioral pattern on all people.⁷

2. Secular Humanism. This term is used to describe a particular kind of humanism that builds its world view and its understanding of reality on the natural, not the supernatural.

A *Secular Humanist Declaration*, drafted by Paul Kurtz as a sequel to *Humanist Manifesto I* (1933) and *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973), spells out some of the views of many who would describe themselves as secular humanists. Here are some of the ideas found in *A Secular Humanist Declaration* which describe the term, secular humanism.⁸

The first principle of democratic secular humanism is its commitment to free inquiry (p. 10).

The secular humanist recognizes the central role of morality in human life. . . .Morality that is not God-based need not be antisocial, subjective, or promiscuous, nor lead to the breakdown of moral standards (pp. 14-15).

We reject the divinity of Jesus, the divine mission of Moses, Mohammed, and other latter day prophets. . . .In spite of the fact that human beings have found religion to be uplifting and a source of solace, we do not find their theological claims to be true (p. 18).

Secular humanism places trust in human intelligence rather than in divine guidance. Skeptical of theories of redemption, damnation, and reincarnation, secular humanists attempt to approach the human situation in realistic terms: human beings are responsible for their own destinies (p. 24).

Those tenets of secular humanism that are atheistic in nature must be vigorously opposed by Christians in

“In the Bible we catch, first of all, a vision of the dignity of being human. God created us. We have worth because we have been created in God’s likeness and bear God’s image (Gen. 1:26).”

general and by Southern Baptists in particular.

3. Christian humanism. A third term to be defined is “Christian humanism.” By this is meant the view that human worth and dignity are affirmed through the Christian faith.

Some say that it is impossible to use “Christian” and “humanism” together. There are those who do describe themselves, however, as “Christian humanists.” Any attempt to understand the whole secular humanism phenomenon must therefore take note of what some people mean when they call themselves “Christian humanists.”

Mark Noll, professor at Wheaton College, describes this kind of humanism:

To avoid the self-defeating pretensions of autonomous, secular humanism, however, the Christian humanist defines his humanism carefully. For him humanistic values flow from divine redemption and they are ordered by divine revelation. . . .The Christian humanist does not feel skittish about using the word *human* since at the heart of his faith stands the confession that God—the originator of everything right and good—himself became a man. This type of humanism is humanism in proper perspective. Autonomous, secular humanism is a humanism sadly and destructively out of focus.⁹

A further word about Christian humanism is offered by Duke professor Robert E. Cushman:

In a word, in contrast with secular humanism, Christian humanism holds that man is not man who spurns his birthright, or (holds) that man is self-deprived of both his dignity and his divine Destiny who accepts his patrimony, like the Prodigal, and departs to a far

country to capitalize on his inheritance to his own ends. . . . Christian humanism is responsible existence under God dedicated to seeking *first* “the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”¹⁰

As Southern Baptists seek to respond to humanism in the most effective and useful ways, moral responsibility requires that we discern which of these kinds of humanism we are dealing with. We should do this in order to offer the most effective opposition to secular humanism that we possibly can. We must resist fuzzy and imprecise thinking about secular humanism if we are to be genuinely effective in countering the grievous errors of secular humanism on the one hand and in opposing opportunists who are trying to use this phenomenon for their own personal agendas on the other hand.

Some Suggestions for Responsible Action

Here are some ways Southern Baptists can act responsibly and effectively in dealing with the secular humanism phenomenon.

These suggestions relate to responding to the whole phenomenon of secular humanism. By phenomenon is meant both the specific philosophy of secular humanism and the political and ideological struggles that are now surrounding secular humanism.

1. Begin with the Bible in understanding and evaluating secular humanism.

In the Bible we catch, first of all, a vision of the dignity of being human. God created us. We have worth because we have been created in God’s likeness and bear God’s image

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(Gen. 1:26). This means that as human beings we are set apart, in a special sense, from the rest of creation. We find our true identity as humans in our unique relationship to God.

In the second place, the Bible teaches that God also judges human beings when we sin (Gen. 3:1-24). Thus Psalm 8 affirms our human dignity: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast

the measure of all things. Biblical ethics is everlastingly concerned about humanity in the concrete, about individual human beings with infinite value and immeasurable worth. Thus, where the ethics of secular humanism is weakest, Bible-based and God-oriented Christian ethics is strongest.

The biblical understanding of humans in relation to God clearly marks as inadequate any and all attempts to be fully human apart from God.

The resolution passed by the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles in 1981 states this important insight: "This

economic exploitation and injustice in our midst. Families are in trouble for a variety of reasons ranging from sexual infidelity to economic stress. The fact that some have embraced a secular humanism philosophy is one of the causes for trouble in our society. But racial prejudice practiced by church members is also a cause of serious trouble in society. It is far too great a simplification to blame all our problems on secular humanism. Restlessness and dissatisfaction in our society may be understandable but we are not justified in settling on any single scapegoat on which to lay all our problems.

3. Apply the gospel to all issues of morality, not just a selected few.

In the debate about secular humanism, the focus has often been on a narrow checklist of carefully chosen issues. In truth, all moral and social issues deserve the careful attention of Christians. Pornography is an important issue but so is peace. Abortion ought to be addressed by Christians, but poverty should be dealt with too. The moral quality of television programming merits our concern and organized action, but so do institutionalized racism and the threat of nuclear war.

The good news of Jesus Christ contains help and guidance for all the issues of life. Christians should resist the temptation associated with the contemporary secular humanism controversy to focus on a few selected issues and thus to ignore many other important issues that trouble individuals and families in our society.

4. Uphold our Baptist heritage by strongly supporting the principle of separation of church and state.

Baptists have long cherished and valiantly fought for the principle of separation of church and state. Indeed, support for this principle is one of the most significant banners which Baptists have carried in our country. Now, in the name of religion, some are attributing the application of this principle of separation of church and state to secular humanism. To betray our great Baptist heritage and to deny this trophy of freedom which

"The good news of Jesus Christ contains help and guidance for all the issues of life."

made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Ps. 8:4-5); and Psalm 9 affirms our human frailty: "Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before thee! Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men!" (Ps. 9:19-20, RSV). The divine Creator holds his human creatures accountable to him.

A third biblical truth is essential in understanding and evaluating human beings and all philosophies about human beings. God is not only Creator and Judge, but also he is Redeemer. At the heart of the biblical teaching about redemption is the incarnation: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. . ." (John 1:14). The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ affirms our human need for redemption. The incarnation also points to the dignity and value of being human. God in Jesus Christ has shown us how to be the complete humans he originally intended us to be before our sin separated us from him.

One of the characteristics of biblical ethics is the emphasis on transcendent standards. Secular humanism, on the other hand, insists that humanity is

Convention reasserts its long-held position that God rather than man is the measure of value in the universe and encourages all Baptists to bear witness to the Good News which feeds the human spirit and ministers to human needs."

2. Be aware of the social dynamics and political forces that have led to the current secular humanism phenomenon.

Secular humanism is far too serious a threat to be taken lightly or to be misunderstood. It deserves strong criticism for its godlessness, but it should not be blamed for political problems or social dynamics for which it is not responsible. Indeed, some of the unsolved problems in our midst such as the quality of public school education and the deterioration of family life, which have been improperly or inadequately dealt with by both the churches and society, have actually given rise to the search for a scapegoat such as secular humanism on which the problems could be blamed.

There are many complex social forces at work in our day. There is justifiable fear of moral permissiveness. There is much

our forebears secured at great sacrifice now for a "mess of pottage" would be a tragic mistake. To let a short-term solution to the issue of secularism determine the long-term achievements that come with a country's commitment to and practice of separation of church and state would be the height of folly.

Take the matter of state-imposed prayers in public schools as an example. Some have supported such prayers perhaps because they live in communities where most people attend some church within the mainline Christian tradition. But how will they respond if they are transferred to a community that is primarily Buddhist? Would they want the state to require their children to pray to Buddha using prayers composed either by Buddhist priests or by government officials bending to Buddhist pressures? Certainly not. Baptists in this country have opposed all attempts of the state to establish any religion. It would be a disastrous mistake now to oppose one erroneous philosophy, secular humanism, by seeking to impose another erroneous approach, the establishment of a state-imposed religion.

Baptists, of all people, ought to resist attempts to undermine the principle of separation of church and state.

5. Move beyond rhetoric to action in dealing with secular humanism.

Look through the literature of both those who oppose secular humanism and those who support it. There is an abundance of rhetoric.

Of course, Christians ought to feel deeply about any philosophy or any behavior that harms individuals and society. But the heat of impassioned feelings ought to come from the light of biblically informed wisdom and common sense instructed by Christian experience. Secular humanism should be taken seriously and resisted for what it actually is, not for the caricature it becomes when reason is trampled underfoot by rhetoric.

If emotion sends us into the battle against secular humanism, let reason dictate the truths we write on the

"It is not enough to battle the philosophy of secular humanism; we ought to help people who are victims of such philosophies that are alien to God's will for human life."

banners we carry.

What is needed, therefore, is to move beyond rhetoric to responsible, fair, energetic, and compassionate action. What is needed is action directed not only toward the manifestations of sin in society but also toward changing the structures and conditions that give rise to these specific manifestations.

It does not help to toss around slogans or labels; rather, Christians ought to act to help hurting human beings.

6. Work through the church to deal with issues raised in the secular humanism controversy.

The church was founded by Jesus Christ and commitment to Christ means that we will love his church, support his church, and work through his church to implement the prayer he taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Today there are many para-church groups, groups that exist alongside the local church. Some are useful and some are essentially harmful. The most effective way to offer a workable and effective alternative to secular humanism is through the local church. Some para-church groups seem to be deliberately using the secular humanism issue to siphon support and supporters from the churches. The actions of Southern Baptist individuals in combating secular humanism can best be directed through our own local churches.

7. Resist errors on all sides in the secular humanism controversy.

As action and reaction set in, hold fast to the truth. Remember that there is more than enough in the philosophy of secular humanism that deserves to be opposed. We should resist adding layers of untruth which mask the true nature, and thus the true danger, of

secular humanism. (One writer prominent in the current crusade against secular humanism holds to a conspiracy theory which holds that there are a mere 275,000 humanists who now tightly control everything from the government to the mass media in our country.)

At the same time, some in the secular humanism camp seek to caricature all their opponents as narrow fanatics with obstructionist designs against all who disagree with them. These errors must also be resisted if truth is to prevail and if the problems of individuals and society are to be dealt with responsibly.

John admonishes Christians to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (John 4:1). We are to use moral discernment in scrutinizing and evaluating the appeals made from the primary actors in this struggle.

8. In dealing with secular humanism, focus on people, not just on problems.

Understanding the needs of people caught up in problems related to family breakdown, economic crisis, and racial injustice can correct a loveless legalism that counts sins without helping sinners. Laws to deal with alcohol use and abuse are needed, but it is also important to focus on people caught up in dilemmas related to alcohol use and abuse.

It is not enough to battle the philosophy of secular humanism; we ought to help people who are victims of such philosophies that are alien to God's will for human life.

Many hurting human beings are now being neglected while those who are in a position to help spend their time instead in ideological warfare. They battle with words while desperately needy people cry out for

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World Hunger Update

At this very moment, 800 million people suffer from hunger or malnutrition.

Today there are more hungry people in the world than ever before. Yet food production has risen to record levels. It is time for Christians to declare war on the ignorance, the indifference, and the injustice which allows approximately 30,000 children to die of starvation each and every day. Starvation has killed more people in the last five years than all of the wars, revolutions, and murders of the last century. **Because hunger is not inevitable, it is morally intolerable.**

Christians are bound by the Word of God. His Word regarding our responsibility to the hungry is unmistakable and does not allow us to ignore hungry people in our neighborhood and in our world. Our Lord was talking about Christian accountability and our response to hunger and the physical needs of the less fortunate when he declared, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matt. 25:45).

More than 600 million of the world's people live on incomes of less than \$50 per year.

Bangladesh

Abdul Halim has four children. He does not read or write. Hard work, when he can find it, is no problem for him. It is no problem, that is, if he has enough strength to work. Abdul would never dream of three good meals a day.

Abdul owns only a very small plot of land: less than one fourth acre. That makes him better off than 35,000,000 other Bangladeshis who own no land, not even the small plot on which their little house rests.

The Halim family must content itself with a meal of rice, occasionally served with a small portion of lentil

soup, but most often with only a few hot peppers and some greens which have been fried. A glass of milk is beyond all expectation. If Abdul can manage this meal twice a day, and if there is work, then he and his family can make it.

In many countries, up to 40 percent of the population is malnourished.

Upper Volta

Issac Bado pastors a small church in Bonyolo, Upper Volta. He has one wife and two small children. During the rainy season he and his wife raise grain sorghum. In the long dry season, they raise vegetables in a small garden. Issac sometimes makes chairs from millet stalks in order to gain extra money. Their yearly income is about \$70.

In the months following harvest, the family eats two or sometimes even three meals a day. As the grain supply diminishes and the planting season approaches, they must cut down to one meal a day or less. The women and children scour the countryside in search of edible fruits and leaves. Even in the best times, meat is reserved for special occasions. The animals raised by the family are kept as security for times of special need—a source of cash to pay taxes, funeral and wedding expenses, medicine in case of illness.

Issac's children suffer from malnutrition and easily fall prey to disease. Life is hard for the Bado family; but they do not complain. If you visit their courtyard, you will probably come away with a gift—eggs, onions, or a chicken. They don't have much, but they know about sharing.

Every morning 40,000 people—30,000 of them children—awaken to die of hunger.

El Salvador

A few hours after daybreak the shooting began and before the day

was done, Juan was the only person in his house alive. Frightened, cold and hungry, Juan sat in his empty house, crying. In a little while, Balmore Garcia was walking down the street and heard Juan crying. He entered his house and realized that Juan was alone. He took Juan with him to the church building where he is caring for over 100 orphans.

In the church building Juan receives three meager meals a day consisting of rice and beans and occasionally an egg, but not very often because eggs cost forty cents each when you can buy them in the little village. Juan and the other orphans sleep on the tile floor at night and have no change of clothes.

Estimates reveal that over 12 million children died from malnutrition last year alone.

Brazil

Sr. Fernando and Dona Ester found it hard to understand. It had not rained sufficiently in the past three years to have a crop. They had been hauling water by the bucket from the river to irrigate their meager crops and garden. Yet, two weeks ago word had come that there had been very heavy rains some 800 miles up the San Francisco River and that some flooding was expected. But not this bad. With a clear sky and no floods for several years it was hard to know how to make preparations. The results were devastating. Part of one wall of their house was washed away and all the meager furniture was damaged and the mattresses ruined.

Meager crops at the river's edge were completely ruined. Without these crops and garden, there is no way to sustain the large family of eleven people. Sr. Fernando had borrowed money for seeds and now all was ruined and he was in debt.

How thankful this couple was for the funds that Southern Baptists through the Foreign Mission Board provided through their local church to help them and their neighbors.

Peace With Justice: A Southern Baptist Approach

by Ronald D. Sisk

In the most basic sense, everyone is for peace. Southern Baptists believe in peace with God and in peace with humankind. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said, and that means peace is both an ideal to be sought and a way of life to be lived.

In the give and take of human life, however, commitment to the ideals of peace must be worked out in the midst of the political events and power rivalries which characterize the corporate existence of nations. In the context of this sinful, dangerous, war-damaged world Southern Baptists are working out a consistent, biblically derived approach to questions of war and peace.

We have a commitment to *peace with justice*. The concept of peace with justice both characterizes Baptists' historical attitudes toward America's wars and suggests the essentially non-pacifist yet biblically based nature of those attitudes.

Baptist support for peace is clear. Most often in times of peace, the Convention has repeatedly adopted resolutions affirming the biblical ideal of peace and calling for national and international initiatives to secure its blessings.

Yet most Southern Baptists have supported the United States—or the Confederacy—in every war in which it has engaged since the founding of the Convention in 1845. Baptist peace concern must be seen as including an equally strong concern for justice in human relationships, a concern which has expressed itself in support for particular wars.

As with many Southern Baptist positions on practical issues, the commitment to peace with justice is not a systematic theological concept. It has developed as Baptist people have responded to events in the light of their biblical faith and in interaction with their culture and society. That



Ronald D. Sisk

commitment, therefore, can best be comprehended by looking first at its separate elements.

Peace

Southern Baptists are committed to peace. Historically, that commitment has been demonstrated repeatedly in Convention statements supporting a variety of peace concerns.

In the midst of the Civil War, which they wholeheartedly supported, Southern Baptists admitted to "earnestly desiring peace."¹ From the 1890s into the early years of the twentieth century, Convention resolutions appeared supporting "arbitration in the place of war as a means of settling difficulties among the nations of the world." The 1895 Convention's peace resolution specifically called for establishment of a "High Court of Nations," an idea which later bore fruit in the establishment of the World Court. In 1911, again supporting arbitration, Southern Baptists pledged themselves to "talk up peace and talk down war," and to "pray God for universal peace."

By 1929, caught up in the revulsion against war which swept the western world in the aftermath of World War I.

Southern Baptists rejoiced in the ratification of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, an international accord "outlawing" war. In 1932 the Convention passed a resolution favoring disarmament, "except such armament as may be absolutely necessary for police duty within our own territory and on our borders."

In 1940, with Europe already at war and the United States in the process of rearming, Southern Baptists expressed "utter abhorrence of war as an instrument of International policy," condemning it as "contrary to the mind and spirit of Christ." The messengers to that year's Convention recognized the right of individuals to conscientious objection and instructed the Executive Committee to provide means for registration and certification of those who declared themselves to be conscientious objectors.

Like most Americans, Southern Baptists received their education on the follies of isolationism in the fiery schoolroom of World War II. By the middle of the war they began seeking a postwar posture for Southern Baptists which would enhance the chances for lasting international peace. They supported the establishment of a United Nations and called for the implementation of principles of political, racial, and economic justice. In 1959 the Convention made the Christian Life Commission its Non-Governmental Observer at the United Nations.

Throughout the Cold War and into the Vietnam era conventions continued to pass periodic resolutions holding forth the ideal of peace. In 1950 the Convention urged "our people not to abandon the ultimate goal of peace and not to surrender to the inevitability of war."

In 1959, a special Committee of World Peace gave a comprehensive treatment of the history of Southern

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Baptist resolutions on peace. Drawing on that tradition, they urged action by Southern Baptists to support world peace through missions, prayer, the media, arms control, and the United Nations. The resolution prepared by the committee also directed the Christian Life Commission to “accelerate its program of study, activity, and education in the interest of world peace.”

The Commission followed the Convention’s wishes, developing a careful analysis of the roots of war in militarism, greed, economic injustice, and the lust for power. Its 1967 report urged the Convention to support a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict. In the midst of that deeply divisive war, the Commission put forth a prophetic word, urging “the churches not to be blinded by distorted appeals to false patriotism so that they lose sight of the personal tragedy, the great sorrow and the fantastic cost attached to the present conflict. A spirit of solemn penitence is in order.” The awareness of human moral frailty which ought to characterize the waging of war was driven home to Southern Baptists even as they supported their country’s efforts in Vietnam.

Over the years, Southern Baptist Convention statements on peace have evidenced an abhorrence of war, a desire for the peaceful settlement of international conflicts, and an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the realities of modern society which make for war. The historical fact that Baptists have been concerned for peace may be further supported by examining Southern Baptist theological convictions.

In 1925 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted its first confession of faith, a non-binding statement titled *The Baptist Faith and Message* and designed to reflect the views of most Convention members. Revised and reaffirmed in 1963, *The Baptist Faith and Message* contains

“A righteous and enduring peace, Baptists of the World War II era believed, could be built on the basis of principles of political freedom, security, racial harmony, economic opportunity, and freedom of religion.”

the following statement on Peace and War, here reproduced in full:

- It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love.

Isa. 2:4; Matt. 5:9, 38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36, 38; Rom. 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Heb. 12:14; James 4:1-2.²

A Christian duty to seek peace based on biblical injunctions thus lies at the heart of Southern Baptists’ understanding of the relationship of the Christian to the political process.

Southern Baptists are for peace. That much is clear.

Justice

With Southern Baptists enduring commitment to peace decisively demonstrated by their history and theology, their occasional support of America’s wars may be more clearly understood.

Southern Baptists have supported particular wars on the basis of their justness and therefore ultimately on the basis of their service of genuine peace. Baptist willingness to fight at particular points has not been based on a love of war but on the opinion that war is sometimes necessary for producing justice in a given situation.

The Southern Baptist Convention of 1863 declared “that the war which has been forced upon us is, on our part, just and necessary.” In that conflict, of course, Southern Baptists fought and died for a particular cause,

human slavery, which was inherently unjust. Even so, they believed they were right and fought on the basis of that conviction.

The Convention’s argument for the justice of some wars was better made on the eve of World War II. In a resolution adopted in 1941 Southern Baptists declared their opposition to the Axis powers because, “They deny the physical, intellectual, moral, social, economic, and spiritual rights and liberties of all who in any way oppose them.” Resistance to that sort of tyranny was seen as more important than political peace: “We declare our belief that some things are worth dying for . . . Among these are liberty under law, that sacred shrine called home, wives and children, the honor of one’s country, and last but not least freedom of worship.” Wishing to avoid the horrors of war, Baptists prayed for a righteous peace and declared their willingness to fight for American ideals.

Realizing that true peace would require more than an end to hostilities, the Foreign Mission Board in 1943 requested the Executive Committee to determine how “to mobilize the sentiments of Southern Baptists for a righteous and lasting peace.” That same year the Social Service Commission report to the Convention declared, “Christians cannot forget the moral aspects of war; they must keep asking about the causes of war and seeking to find a cure.”

A righteous and enduring peace, Baptists of the World War II era believed, could be built on the basis of principles of political freedom, security, racial harmony, economic opportunity, and freedom of religion. Thus they recognized that lasting peace would come only with the realization of justice among and within the nations of the world.

Similarly, the Christian Life Commission report of 1967 affirmed the scriptural importance of principles of justice in human relationships, pointed to the violation of these principles as impediments to peace, and called for "an honorable and just peace" in Vietnam as a condition to the end of that long and bloody war.

Produced at a time of profound division within the nation on the subject of Vietnam, the Commission report represents one of the best examples of a "peace with justice" approach in Southern Baptist history. As such, the document emphasizes the necessity of working for justice in human relationships as a way of preventing war. It also acknowledges that the fact that "historical situations

peace. Peace with justice is the aim because peace without justice is no peace at all.

Peace with Justice

Southern Baptists' historical concern for peace with justice means that conflicts must always be carefully examined to see whether justice is served. Civil War history points out that Southern Baptists have sometimes been wrong about whether justice was better served by fighting. Many Baptists questioned the correctness of American involvement in Vietnam because they believed more harm than good was being done. Some Baptists support the use of nuclear weapons for purposes of national defense while others argue

arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, torture, unfair trial, cruel and unusual punishment, and invasion of privacy; *rights* to family life, property, work, and equal pay for equal work as well as food, shelter, health care, and education; and *freedom of thought, speech, assembly, religion, movement, and participation in government.*" No nation completely fulfills all human rights. Yet the fulfillment of these components of justice in the life of all humankind is both the proper task of Christians and a basic prerequisite for the establishment of enduring peace among nations.

3. Conscientious objection is one valid personal response to problems of war and peace. Since World War II the Southern Baptist Convention has recognized the right of individuals under God to choose not to participate in military conflicts. Such a decision is not for everyone, but the individual's right to decide must be respected.

4. Each situation should be evaluated on its own merits. War can be justified only by massive, flagrant, continuing violation of basic human rights. The only valid purpose for war is to restore justice to the oppressed. War must both be fought for justice and be fought with justice. Recognizing with the 1941 Southern Baptist Convention that "some things are worth dying for," we must also recognize that we will answer to God for every bomb that is dropped, every bullet that is fired, every life that is cut short by war. War which causes more injustice than it corrects can never be justified. No Christian should support a war which, in his best judgment, is not just.

¹All quotes, unless otherwise indicated, are from annuals of the Southern Baptist Convention.

²*The Baptist Faith and Message*, 1963, pp. 18-19.

³*Ibid.*, p. 18.

Ronald D. Sisk is director of program development for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. One of Sisk's major program assignments is peace with justice.

"Peace is not simply the absence of war. It is the presence of justice in human relationships. It is the realization in practice of basic human rights."

recur when war seems to be the lesser of two evils" comes from prior neglect of "the things that make for peace." In other words, war may sometimes be necessary to restore justice in human relationships, though war itself is always tragic. But when war is necessary, it is necessary only because principles of justice have been neglected to the point where their peaceful restoration is no longer possible.

Shaped by interaction between hawks and doves on the Convention floor, the 1967 Commission report as adopted reflects an essentially accurate picture of the range of Baptist opinion. Supporting peace, Baptists demand justice. That peace which is sought is, as *The Baptist Faith and Message* declares, peace based "on principles of righteousness."³ Recognizing the tremendous evils inherent in war, Southern Baptists have been willing to risk its evils only in the face of greater evils of dehumanization, injustice, and exploitation. Principles of justice are valued not because they are more precious than peace but because without them there can be no true

that no nuclear war could ever be just because of the tremendous amount of damage which nuclear weapons cause. Each individual must make these kinds of judgments according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. An examination of the history of Convention statements does, however, suggest certain basic guidelines for approaching issues related to war and peace.

1. Peace is the goal to be sought. We are to "seek peace with all men." Anything less than a determined effort for peace fails to live up to the demands of the gospel. Negotiation, reasoned compromise, or arbitration are preferable to use of force except in the most extreme situations.

2. Justice is the criterion by which peace is judged. Peace is not simply the absence of war. It is the presence of justice in human relationships. It is the realization in practice of basic human rights. Meeting in Atlanta in 1978, the Convention adopted the Christian Life Commission's recommendation that defined those basic human rights as "*freedom from involuntary servitude,*

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deeds, deeds of love, help, compassion, and justice.

9. Pray for wisdom to deal with the issues related to secular humanism and pray for those who differ with us on these issues.

A full prayer life relates not only to individual actions, but to the broadest range of social concerns. Pray for wisdom in dealing with all these issues related to secular humanism. Through prayer we can move past arrogance to an earnest search for truth as we oppose all ideas and philosophies which seek to undermine the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer also will enable us to act with love toward those who differ with us about secular humanism. It will give us the power to hold firmly to the conviction of our Christian faith and still act compassionately toward those who differ with us.

Faithful prayer is essential to us as we deal with all the tensions, emotions, problems, and challenges that surround the secular humanism phenomenon.

Pray for God's help to be moral and to act morally, to be fully human and to act in truly human reflection of God's image in us. Pray that the roots of our Christian faith will issue in the fruits of righteousness, good works, peace, and justice. Pray that our churches will not tolerate a cut-flower perception that would justify roots without fruits or attempt to produce fruits without roots. Pray that our commitment to the great values and ideals which characterize the Christian faith may not be minimized and trivialized by secular standards.

10. In dealing with the secular humanism phenomenon, be open to the energizing power and hope made available to us through the Holy Spirit.

Given the complexity of these issues, and given the fierce controversy that sometimes rages about them, we need staying power to

keep on dealing with secular humanism. Through a commitment to Jesus Christ continually energized by the Holy Spirit, we gain perspective about these issues and we gain strength to be salt and light in our world. Involvement in the crucial moral and social issues of our day is not an option for the Christian; it is an imperative.

Not only do we receive power through the Holy Spirit but we also gain a hope that change can take place in our world. We have the assurance that the investment of our lives in efforts to change structures of our society is not wasted effort if we follow God's guidance for the work we do.

It is the demonstration of this divine power and hope in our lives that is one of the most forceful arguments against secular humanism. The practice of a contagious faith in Christ enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit can serve as an eloquent affirmation of the reality of God's witness and work in the world.

FOOTNOTES

¹Paul Kurtz, *A Secular Humanist Declaration*, a reprint from *Free Inquiry Magazine*, Vol. 1, #1, Winter, 1980, p. 7.

²T. B. Maston, *The Christian, the Church, and Contemporary Problems* (Waco: Word Books, 1968), p. 193.

³*Torcaso v. Watkins*, 367 U.S. 488.

⁴*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, MA: G & C Merriam Co., 1976), p. 1100.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Richard B. Cunningham, *Christianity and Contemporary Humanism*, a faculty address presented at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky on November 4, 1981, pp. 6-8.

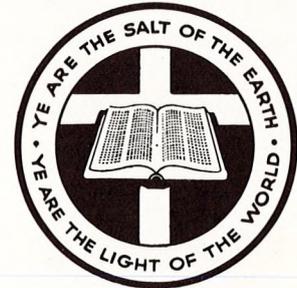
⁸Kurtz, *op. cit.*

⁹Mark A. Noll, quoted in *Context*, Martin Marty, ed. (April 1, 1981), p. 3.

¹⁰Robert E. Cushman, quoted in *Context*, Martin Marty, ed. (June 15, 1981), p. 4.

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