

Light

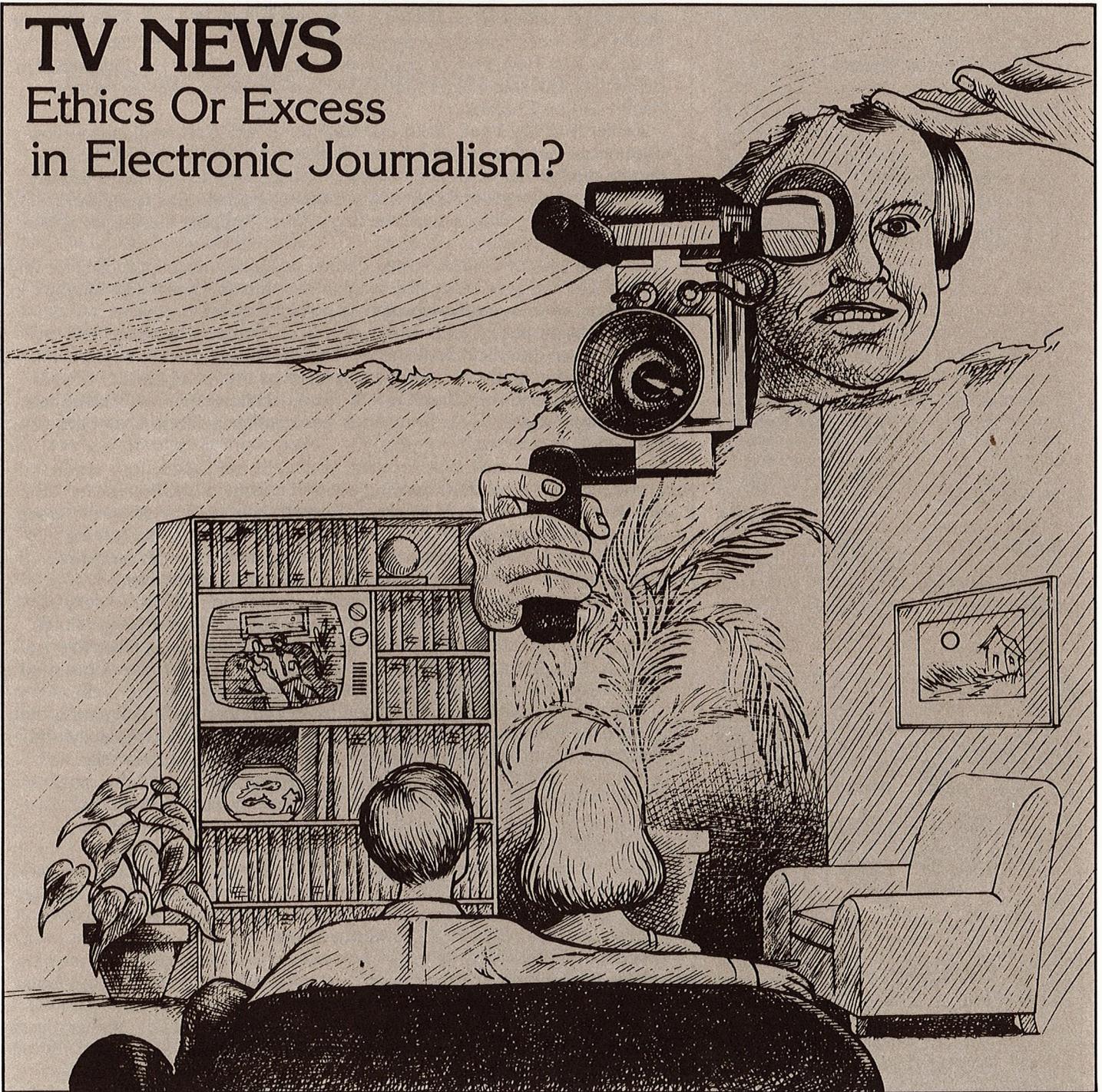
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST CONVENTION

OCTOBER 1984

TV NEWS

Ethics Or Excess in Electronic Journalism?



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**Christian Life
Commission
Of The Southern
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RED, WHITE AND BLUE RELIGION

Last Sunday morning in church services at the Second Baptist Church of Little Rock, I sat ten feet from a place indelibly stamped in my memory. At that spot some years ago, the flag-covered coffin of Brooks Hays rested as multitudes gathered to pay their last tribute to a great Christian and a great statesman. (He was also a great Baptist, a great humanitarian, a great ally of the Christian Life Commission and a great friend.) It was not incongruous that the star-spangled red, white, and blue American flag draped his coffin. For so towering a champion of both church and state, it would have been somehow inappropriate for the flag not to have been there. Brooks Hays was *for* church and he was *for* state. He understood in depth and with rare insight that a Christian can be patriotic and that a patriot can be Christian.

Earlier that day I had heard and watched a television religionist wallowing unconscionably in civil religion. Seeking to use both religion and the flag to support his political preferences which seem to coincide precisely with the preferences of those who are paying his bills, this preacher-promoter managed to debase the flag and to denigrate the gospel at one and the same time.

Civil religion, of course, serves certain politically useful purposes for any nation. The dangers of the civil religion now running absolutely rampant in America, however, vastly outweigh its political values.

Civil religion puts Caesar where only God Almighty has a right to be. The seven so-called cardinal sins (pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust) are not nearly as cardinal as the sin of idolatry. This is why the First Commandment is not, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not commit adultery," or "Thou shalt not steal," but "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Civil religion is deist, not Christian, tipping its hat politely to a vague providence but steadfastly denying the particularity of the incarnation, the deliberate provincialism of Jesus of Nazareth and the scandal of the cross without which there would be no authentic Christianity. Churches for whom Jesus Christ is himself the chief cornerstone have no business identifying with civil religion's faceless, formless, nameless deity.

Civil religion is unitarian, not trinitarian, accepting neither the deity of Christ nor the person and place of the Holy Spirit. Bible-believing church leaders who cast their lot with civil religion's unitarianism in order to support their preferred political candidate of the hour are betraying one of Christianity's most fundamental theological truths.

Civil religion intermingles and then fuses church and state, ignoring one of history's most profoundly important lessons, that both Christianity and civilization flourish best when church and state are kept organically separate so that the gears of one do not engage the cogs of the other.

Civil religion is vacuous religiosity, not revealed religion, a kind of American Shinto that moves inexorably toward the lowest common denominator in public life, studiously avoiding the exclusiveness of Christianity which understands that God has shown humanity his face in Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.

For Christians, the god of civil religion is too small, too vague, too general and too impotent to be worthy of our last full measure of devotion. We will welcome the flag on our coffins if thoughtful people who survive us decide it would be appropriate; but we will not idolatrously bow the knee to any red, white and blue deity.

Foy Valentine
Foy Valentine
Executive Director

TELEVISION NEWS

Ethics or Excess in Electronic Journalism?

By Mark A. Wyatt

The men and women who pursue their journalistic craft in the electronic media, particularly television, walk a fine line between responsible reporting and video voyeurism.

Sometimes bold strides are made along that twisting pathway but at other times the walk is more a stumbling excuse for forward movement than a deliberate and purposeful progression into the land of Truth and Fairness. It's a land well charted by previous travelers in those parts and still under survey by some committed, conscientious persons. It also is a land worthy of continued exploration by those who journey daily into the frontiers of life and send back to the rest of us dispatches on what's going on out there.

Worthy, perhaps; but whether and how well that exploration is continuing seem to be increasingly arguable points when you consider New Bedford, Mass. and Manhattan Beach, Calif. as cases in point.

New Bedford and Manhattan Beach lie a continent apart in one respect and worlds apart in others. But recent televised news coverage of sensational criminal cases in these two communities brought them together in lurid detail in millions of American homes. Live broadcasts of testimony from the Massachusetts gang rape trial were followed within weeks by court room coverage of the California child rape case. Instantly, electronically, and for several weeks home viewers' televisions were transformed into electronic peepholes.

What was wrong was not that the proceedings of the judicial process were presented to inform the public of the restoration and continuation of

social order in these two communities. But in the publishing of crime details which can have no demonstrably good effect on the public at large, the media involved not only pandered to the baser instincts of the viewing audience but in effect played the pimp for irresponsible interests whose purpose is not to educate but to titillate.¹ No justification was or likely could be made for the extent of this crass coverage whose purpose seems solely to have been raising ratings at the expense of raising the standards of broadcast responsibility.

Proper ethical constraint demands a level of moral decency within the media—that is, within the people who wield the decision making power in television—never to become purveyors of pornography under the

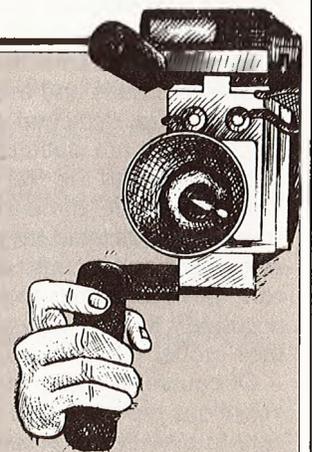
guise of freedom of the press. The newspaper industry years ago set an unfortunate analogous precedent when the ideal "all the news that's fit to print" became perverted to "all the news that fits in print."

A significant concern of some broadcasters is television's emphasis on the visual element and the danger that decisions about news coverage will be made on the basis of picture possibilities rather than the importance of the information to be imparted.² It's much easier to show pictures of a freeway traffic snarl than to explain graphically the impact of proposed welfare cutbacks or tax increases. The "fuzz and was" mentality lingers in many broadcast news organizations, playing up the visually bountiful stories involving police (fuzz) and all but natural deaths (was).

Reporters and editors must guard against reacting with disappointment that the body discovered in the third-story, walk up flat was that of an elderly pensioner who died alone, undramatically. Rather, they should realize that tragedy doesn't have to involve violence. A natural death need not go unnoticed, but neither does every violent incident require air time.

That presents another characteristic of television news which affects the way the media's messages are perceived. News is, by definition, that

"Proper ethical constraint demands a level of moral decency within the media—that is, within the people who wield the decision making power in television—never to become purveyors of pornography under the guise of freedom of the press."

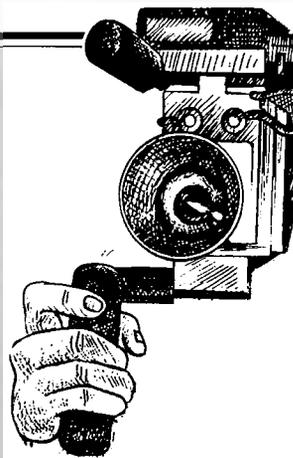


which is unusual or out of the ordinary. (When did you ever hear a story about nothing happening at city hall unless that lack of action was in contrast to an anticipated event?)

That being the case, then most of the content of news programs is

strate the interrelatedness of events. Too often the visual emphasis of television does not clearly communicate that murders, rapes, corruption, plane crashes and natural disasters are the exceptions in life, not the rules. Television news must seriously

"Most of the content of news programs is atypical with respect to people's everyday existence TV news must seriously address its responsibility to remind viewers that what they're seeing are the aberrations of life and not the average."



atypical with respect to people's everyday existence. It is generally not news, for instance, when a car is driven along the street. It becomes news when that car is driven along the sidewalk, mowing down a line of people standing in a free food line.

Television news has the capacity to present issues and events in neatly encapsulated, detached segments; pieces which are static and void of relationship with the rest of reality. This 'slice of life' dimension understandably is dictated by such considerations as time and cost. Without care, however, it fails to present accurately those issues and events in their proper perspective.

Of course, in many cases conscientious reporters and editors take care to provide the proper analysis and interpretation of events. Trends are identified, early warning signals sounded and agenda proposed to deal with the problems which are exposed. Too frequently, however, those same reporters and editors abdicate their responsibility to make the proper connections and demon-

strate the interrelatedness of events. Too often the visual emphasis of television does not clearly communicate that murders, rapes, corruption, plane crashes and natural disasters are the exceptions in life, not the rules. Television news must seriously

address its responsibility to remind viewers that what they're seeing are the aberrations of life and not the average. U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop told a Fordham University audience that "people who see violence happening have an intuitive reaction that some of it is fantasy."³ Where news reporting of violence is concerned, broadcasters must clearly distinguish between fantasy and fact. Unless they do the media will continue contributing to a growing news neurosis in which people become increasingly unable to accept experiential reality.

Like the city child who refuses to sample fresh farm produce because it came out of the ground and not a can, a whole generation of Americans are becoming unwilling to relate to life except through what Rodney Clapp calls the "mediated experience" of television.⁴ And while the viewer must bear responsibility for his own life, the broadcaster must provide the proper tools to help that viewer make informed decisions.

That isn't the same thing as providing purchasers with product information. Television may be effective as a means of selling consumer goods but probably is less persuasive in shaping opinion. Robert Don Hughes correctly observes that while "the media are highly effective in changing our attitudes about deodorant or breakfast cereal, they have little impact in changing our religious or political views."⁵

The difference is one of substance. Consumer catalogs, even in TV ad form, offer concrete goods and specific services. The mixed media menu is more abstract: pre-digested politics, instant ideology, scrambled sociology, mashed morality and dehydrated demagoguery. But the mix must be offered and broadcasters must resist the temptation to make viewers' decisions for them, however strong the temptation and however incapable of intelligent decision making their particular public may seem.

Similarly television newspeople must guard against politicians and other power brokers who try, often successfully, to influence decisions on news coverage. An obvious example in this or any election year is President Reagan or any incumbent. Still, it bears mentioning since in the case of Mr. Reagan even those who are openly critical of White House "photo opportunities" succumb to the seductive mystique of celebrities on parade.

When the president plays host to pop music megastar Michael Jackson, basketball champions the Boston Celtics or some other somebodies, all America is watching. Not because of any authentic importance in the event, but because the Office of the President is involved.

If broadcasters are pandering to video voyeurs by covering sordid criminal trials, then submitting to calculated manipulation by politicians is outright whoredom. This is especially so when the politician in question manages to avoid direct comment on genuinely important issues, whether through evasion of questions or through the questioners' inability to elicit a meaningful response.

Again in the case of President Reagan, strategic use of infrequent news conferences, carefully choreo-

graphed visits to Ireland and Normandy and other public relations methods have enabled a skillful communicator to prevent long term damage from criticism about such actions as the use of U.S. Marines in Lebanon and mining the harbors of Nicaragua.

John F. Kennedy's Bay of Pigs fiasco may represent the other extreme in the accountability the media demand or obtain from Oval Office occupants, but it presents a standard against which news organizations need to measure current performance in monitoring the accomplishments and failures of politicians. And care still must be taken not to be mesmerized by the mouthings of the media-savvy. Washington D.C. in 1984 may not be the Camelot of the early '60s, but deception still strikes a handsome pose and guardians of Truth and Fairness must remain vigilant or become victims.

Other insidious dangers roam freely, too. One is the trap of self-importance that persuades otherwise rational and humble men and women that their place in the on-camera spotlight elevates their every word and impression to something more than the mere conveyance of thoughts and ideas. It's a charade, of

course, but sometimes newspeople, including those behind the scenes, don't realize that the emperors they believe they have become are wearing no clothes. Fortunately, sooner or later they all feel the draft.

Television news, like most other fields of endeavor, has its own watchdogs and often they perform a valuable service for the viewing public. CBS's Charles Kuralt reminds us of our common heritage and our shared humanness. Public Broadcasting's Bill Moyers warns that advancing technology has already outpaced useful political dialogue. "The Frankenstein we helped to build," Moyers says, "is loose on the world."⁶

But in spite of these and others who recognize a monster or a naked emperor when they see one, television news needs some guidelines, preferably internal ones which are more than lip service, to carry out the public trust committed to broadcasters. Some such guidelines exist already. A good one to begin with is the Golden Rule, which might be called the original "Fairness Doctrine."⁷ Sadly, Murphy's Golden Rule is more often practiced: "Whoever has the gold makes the rules."

The National Association of Broad-

casters has long had a voluntary code setting boundaries for program content within limits of relative decency. Changing social standards, however, open new doors of interpretation for what is and is not decent. Similarly, canons set forth in 1923 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors provide worthy guidance for all journalistic outlets. But even these can be seen as a fine line separating the realm of falsehood and innuendo from the land of Truth and Fairness.

Like all fine lines this one is subject to blurring and even erasure. The culprits responsible for instances when that happens may be as innocent as a thoughtlessly unasked question or as malevolent as an intentionally omitted or distorted detail. The problem is that both extremes tend to erode the middle ground of ethical propriety where most journalists presumably try to remain.

It is only with proper attention to those ethical boundaries that television news will keep the balance it needs to avoid falling the wrong way off the narrow path it treads.⁸ One hopes that path will lead to wisdom and to tolerance and that the purpose of the walk will continue to be the pursuit of truth rather than profit or pride. ■

Notes

¹Curtis MacDougall, *Interpretative Reporting*, 6th ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 28.

²Mark W. Hall, *Broadcast Journalism* (New York: Hastings House, 1971), p. 17.

³*Associated Press*, March 12, 1984.

⁴Rodney Clapp, "Vanishing Childhood," *Christianity Today* (June 15, 1984), p. 22.

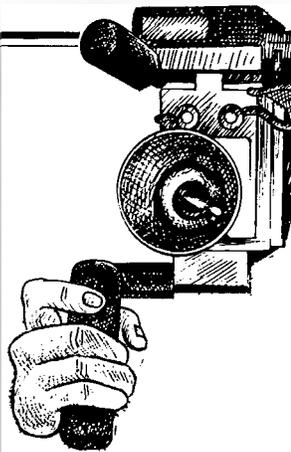
⁵Robert Don Hughes, "The Church and the Media," *Review and Expositor*, Vol. LXXXI, No. 1 (Winter, 1984), p. 32.

⁶*The Washington Post*, February 26, 1984, p. D-3.

⁷Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31.

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"If broadcasters are pandering to video voyeurs by covering sordid criminal trials, then submitting to calculated manipulation by politicians is outright whoredom."



CRIME against the ELDERLY

Some Ways Your Church
Can Address the Problem

By Roger L. Hauser



The fear of crime among America's over 65 population is a growing concern in church and society. Almost weekly we hear of an older adult who has been beaten, robbed, raped or held hostage. What can a local Southern Baptist church do to aid its older membership in warding off violence and other acts of crime?

By the end of this century the number of people under 65 years of age will increase 17 percent while those 65 to 75 will increase 14 percent. The greatest increase, 53 percent, will occur among those 75 and older—an estimate with important implications since this group is most vulnerable to violence and other acts of crime.

Surprisingly, however, statistics regarding violence and the older adult indicate that senior adults actually have a lower incidence of

victimization than those under 65. Senior adults over age 65 have much lower victimization rates in nearly all categories of personal crime, including rape, robbery, assault and theft.

According to research conducted by Erdman B. Palmore of Duke University, when all personal crimes are combined, individuals over age 65 have a victimization rate that is less than one-fourth of all persons over age 12.

Nevertheless, violent acts upon older citizens do occur daily, and these actions enrage our society because of the special vulnerability of the frail elderly. "Who would dare attack an older person?" we ask.

Furthermore, in recent surveys, fear of violence and crime appeared among the top ranked concerns of older adults. Statistics may indicate an actual lower victimization rate, but the fear of crime can be almost as debilitating as the crime itself.

What are these crimes and how can the church and community lessen the environment and anxiety of victimization? There are three general areas in which the older person is victimized: acts of force, non-violent victimization and medical fraud.

Acts of force are commonly referred to as "crimes on the street." Purse snatching is an example. While statistics indicate that older persons are

not victimized by criminal assault as often as young men, the older person is most vulnerable emotionally to the crime.

Violence against the elderly has a much more traumatic effect physically, financially and psychologically than for younger age groups.

Both church and community organizations can offer workshops or seminars for older citizens on crime prevention. If senior adults understand how they can combat crime, their anxiety about being victimized will decrease significantly.

Simple prevention methods that could be taught, for example, include how to secure doors and windows from forceful entry and the need to lower shrubs around the house for better visibility in the neighborhood. These steps would discourage unlawful entry.

SEMINAR ON AGING

An advanced seminar in basic gerontology will be held Jan. 14-18, 1985, in Atlanta.

The National Seminar on Aging, sponsored by the senior adult section of the Sunday School Board's family ministry department, will deal with the psychology, physiology, sociology and theology of aging. Purpose is to help persons understand the aging process and its implications for local church ministry.

Among the seminar topics are balanced senior adult ministry, social gerontology, the Bible and aging, health and economic concerns, retirement, community resources, and policy and programs on aging.

Faculty will include Roger Hauser and Horace Kerr of the BSSB senior adult section; Ben Dickerson, director of the gerontological studies program at Baylor; Dennis Myers, professor in Baylor's social work department; and James D. Williams, associate to the president at the BSSB and former professor of adult education at Southwestern Seminary.

For additional information, contact Hauser, 127 Ninth Ave. North, Nashville, TN 37234. ■

National projects such as the increasingly popular Neighborhood Watch program also could be organized within the church community. The local law enforcement agency in most communities could provide assistance. Senior adults also can be taught ways to deter violent crime, including when and where to walk at night, not walking alone, and carrying a whistle to use as an alarm. This type of educational program, offered through the church, can help alleviate many of the fears of older persons and lower the likelihood of victimization.

The news media have reported many examples of nonviolent victimization, such as the isolated older adult who loses thousands of dollars through a bunco crime. Statistics indicate that more than 90 percent of bunco victims are over 65 and are primarily women. The crimes range from a "bank examiner" scheme to social security or welfare check fraud. Public awareness, usually stimulated by media coverage, is the best means for warding off non-violent crimes of this nature. When the church or a community institution hears of someone being victimized through bunco, often the news media, as well as the police, should be contacted.

A third area of elderly victimization is medical fraud. Many "get well

"The fear of crime can be almost as debilitating as the crime itself."

quick" gimmicks are targeted at older persons. These may include cures for cancer, arthritis, blindness, deafness, or even some miraculous means to stop the aging process and extend life.

The monetary loss to such schemes can be phenomenal. An individual's life savings can be totally exhausted in a matter of months. Not only can there be a substantial loss financially, but due to the individual being deterred from adequate health care,

one's life can be threatened.

Some of the physical problems attributed to older adulthood make the senior adult more vulnerable than others to medical fraud. The more serious the health disability, the more desperate many individuals become. Estimates indicate that approximately

"If senior adults understand how they can combat crime, their anxiety about being victimized will decrease significantly."

7 out of 10 cases of medical fraud involve older adults.

The church, the community and the family must communicate to the older person the importance of checking the legitimacy and qualifications of any individual or group offering medical services. Always be certain that health care providers being considered are licensed by the state. This process would alleviate much of the growing medical fraud in our communities.

The church can allay many of the fears of older adults by addressing the issues, means and methods of crime and violence against the elderly. Through educational programs in senior adult organizations, crimes against the elderly can be lessened dramatically. Awareness of techniques to thwart acts of force, an understanding of methods of non-violent victimization, and a consciousness of potential medical fraud will enable the elderly to live with less anxiety and with less actual risk of becoming a victim of crime and violence. ■

Hauser, senior adult consultant in the family ministry department at the Baptist Sunday School Board, was a participant in the Christian Life Commission's consultation on aging earlier this year. He holds a B.A. degree in social work from Armstrong State College, Savannah, Ga., an M.S. in gerontology from North Texas State University, and an M.R.E. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

MINING ETHICS in the PSALMS

The January Bible Study Topic
Offers More Than You May Think

By Ira H. Peak, Jr.

If the Bible is actually to function as our guide for faith and practice in daily life, then we must appropriate the "whole counsel of God." Deep appreciation for favorite passages and books of the Bible is typical of most Christians and enriches life immeasurably. Problems emerge, however, when the range of one's most deeply loved verses defines the parameters of a kind of "personal canon" of Scripture.

Any principle of selectivity—no matter how subtly held or sincerely believed—necessarily excludes portions of the Bible from its purview. The danger is that personal biases and cultural predispositions may be used, however unintentionally, to evaluate the Bible, rather than be judged by the Bible.

Accordingly, it behooves all of us—especially those who have a burden for "applied Christianity"—to approach the scriptures with the aim of opening ourselves to moral guidance from portions of the Bible which may not seem to be pre-eminently ethical in nature.

For most people, no doubt, the Psalms would fall into that category. Being a collection of hymns, poems and wisdom sayings, we may be inclined to see the Psalter as valuable primarily for devotional study, worship and pastoral care of the ill or bereaved.

Yet Psalms is also a veritable "gold mine" of ethical resources. The time to discover (or rediscover) this reality is now, because this book will be the focus of the 1985 January Bible Study in Southern Baptist churches.

The student of Psalms may face disappointment if he or she comes to the book with expectations of specific guidance on contemporary issues. Psalms most assuredly does

contain direct teaching on a variety of current problems, both personal and social. Yet its broader moral significance for our personal lives (and for the Christian community) may inhere less in its treatment of key issues than in its focus on the moral agent and the dynamics of "moral formation" (the shaping of moral character).

This fact about Israel's hymnbook does not diminish its ethical significance. If anything, that significance is thereby enhanced. Sorting out facts about issues and projecting the consequences of actions, however necessary, is not the larger part of ethics.

The infinitely more difficult and important task of ethics is to attend to the processes (both interior and social) of assessing, valuing and judging which go on more or less continuously, and in the midst of all this to bring these processes to conscious articulation. The Bible should make its greatest impact on ethics by helping us to understand the dimensions of God-like character and the dynamics of its development within the context of the community of faith.

To come at this another way, our task in Christian ethics is never to produce "moral experts" or develop "moral expertise." (Moral experts are generally dangerous individuals, "puffed up" with pride, bent on moral aggrandizement.) Rather our task is to assist brothers and sisters of faith in their pilgrimages, both individually and corporately, toward "Christ-likeness," toward having formed within them the "mind of Christ."

The Psalms is an invaluable resource for carrying out this mandate. Not the least important dimension of its ethical instruction is the

manner in which it highlights the significance of moral integrity.

The Hebrew word for "integrity" is *tom, tumah*. The associated adjectival derivative is *tamin*, meaning "sound, wholesome, unimpaired" (Psalm 25: 21). The related verb form is *tam*, generally meaning "be complete, finished." It can mean in the verb form "entirely consumed" (Psalm 73:19); or, as in the well-known verse, Psalm 19:14, it connotes "be complete, sound, unimpaired ethically."

The noun form of "integrity" most commonly means "completeness, wholeness" (Psalm 78:22). A derived meaning is "integrity of mind, upright heart" (Psalms 7:8, 26:1, 11, 41:12 and 101:2). These latter passages imply sincerity of heart and motive, singleness of purpose, genuineness and truthfulness.

In biblical thought moral character is not judged by any absolute ideal (as in Greek philosophy), but in relation to the nature and moral character of God. Hence a person's character cannot be evaluated, in biblical perspective, in strictly behavioral terms. Yet behavior cannot be ignored either.

In God there is perfect coincidence between his character and his action. This coincidence of character and motive with action is the standard for human integrity. Integrity marks the

"Biblically, integrity is a relational term, implying wholeness of personhood in relation to God, oneself and others."

person who walks with singlehearted devotion to God and honorable behavior among other people.

Assertions of integrity, however, do not indicate a spirit of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction. Persons of integrity are also keenly aware of personal sin (as witnessed by confessions in Psalms 51:5, 69:5, etc.).

In the popular mind, integrity is often identified with a kind of "teeth-gritting" resolve to conform one's behavior to an external standard. One

would think here of a judge's steadfast refusal to accept a bribe to influence judgment in a case before the court. This would be commendable, indeed, but this judge would not necessarily be a person of integrity in the biblical sense.

In biblical perspective integrity is a relational term. Integrity implies completeness or wholeness of personhood in relation to God, oneself and others. Perhaps a contemporary synonym for the biblical concept would be "transparency." The "transparent" person is one whose words and deeds, motives and actions, personal life and social responsiveness are all of one piece, rooted in a growing relationship to God.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Psalms draws a direct connection between moral uprightness and authentic worship of Jehovah. This connection is highlighted in Psalms 15 and 24. It is fascinating to note that these particular psalms were probably "catechetical." (In all likelihood they had profound influence on the prophets.) *In every instance the criteria for true worshippers is inescapably moral.*

The foregoing observations merely point the reader to the tip of an enormous iceberg. If one will explore beneath the surface, he or she will be awed by the magnitude of the ethical dimensions of the Psalms. Beyond the emphasis on formation of moral character, they contain invaluable insights into the moral character of God, the nature of enduring values and ideals, instruction in social justice and empathetic engagement with the problems of evil and suffering.

The individual who takes the time to "mine the Psalms" will discover an enormous ethical treasure. ■

Peak is director of the department of Christian moral concerns for the Missouri Baptist Convention. For the third consecutive year, he and his wife, Ashli, have collaborated on a special ethics resource for leaders and participants in the 1985 January Bible study. Copies of the study guide, Moral Issues in the Psalms, may be ordered from Department of Christian Moral Concerns, Missouri Baptist Convention, 400 East High St., Jefferson City, MO 65101. Cost is \$2 per copy.



THE NUMBERS GAME

Behind Every Winner Stand Millions of Losers

By Larry Braidfoot

Lottery fever is sweeping the country. The media are having a field day with sensationalistic stories about retired carpenters winning millions. Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York and Ohio lotteries all have produced jackpots near or surpassing \$20 million.

Usually the stories indicate how much money the state is going to get from the lottery in the form of taxes. Frequently buried near the end of the story is a line about the minimal odds of winning. Both of these facts deserve more scrutiny.

The Massachusetts lottery generated a jackpot of \$13 million for the person lucky enough to select the six numbers which were drawn. In order to generate a jackpot of that size, bettors would have to wager about \$22.4 million, since in Massachusetts only 58% of the amount bet is returned to the winner. The state would get only \$6.72 million (28%) in taxes and the rest—\$3.14 million (14%)—would go for overhead.

The New York lottery generated a \$22.1 million jackpot (44%) from about \$50 million wagered. The state got about \$20.5 million (41%) of the total wagered, with about \$7.8 million (15%) going toward overhead.

The recent "big news" was the Ohio lottery, with a \$27 million jackpot. To get that size jackpot, bettors would have to wager \$53 million, of which \$19.6 million (37%) would go to the state and about \$6.4 million (12%) would go for overhead.

The lottery folks, of course, would have us believe this is great, for both the bettors and the state. What they want bettors to overlook is the fact that the lottery makes the worst payoff, on a percentage basis, of any legal form of gambling. At most horsetracks, the takeout rate is only about 15%, so most of the money wagered goes back to the bettors. Even slot machines have a better pay off than the lottery.

And talk about the odds! The odds of winning the jackpot on the Massachusetts lottery were one in 1.9 million. An MIT math professor said that was like playing poker and being dealt four straight royal flushes, all in spades, and then leaving the poker table to meet four complete strangers who had the same birthday!

The odds of winning the New York lottery were about one in 3.5 million. A lottery official said the odds of being hit by lightning were better—only about one in 2 million.

But those are great odds compared to the Ohio lottery. There the odds of winning were about one in 9 million.

Even people who don't want to talk about Christian morals ought to question the morality of a state foisting a sham off on its citizens under the guise of a "painless" form of tax revenue. ■

What do you do with women who feel strongly they have been called to preach and want to be ordained?

Despite the controversy surrounding this issue in Southern Baptist circles, the question will not go away.

The fact of women as clergy, pastors and preachers is basically a reality of our time. Indeed, some future church historian may write that the most revolutionary thing in the life of the church during the last third of the 20th century was the emergence of women in strong roles of leadership, especially as pastors and ordained ministers.

In some Protestant theological seminaries, women make up 40 to 50 percent of the enrollment. Many

of them want and expect to become ordained ministers. We do not have that kind of percentages in our Southern Baptist seminaries but the number of young women is growing. Some of them feel God has called them to preach. They want to be ordained and become pastors.

I have some of these young women in my preaching classes at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. They are as sincere and highly motivated as the young men, and they preach as well. Who is to deny the reality of their call and say they cannot preach? To do so is to play the role of God.

So how do we respond to this divisive issue? I believe the question of ordaining women as ministers can

only be answered adequately against the background of a theology of liberation.

A Theology of Liberation

One of the great themes of the Bible is that of liberation. God seeks to deliver men and women from bondage and give them freedom. He wants to snap the bonds that bind them, strike the chains that enslave them and bear away the bars that imprison them. God seeks to break the powers that enslave whether they are spiritual, moral, intellectual, political, economic or social. He wants his people to be free so they, without coercion, can choose to be his children and reach the full potential of their lives.

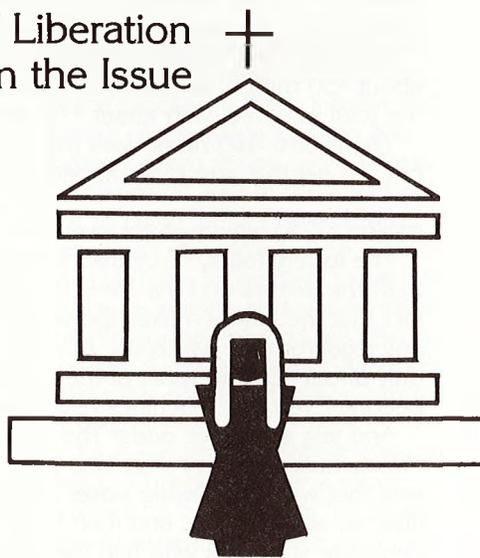
The Exodus was the high point in Israel's life. She always looked back to it for inspiration and guidance as she charted her course into an unknown future. Exodus told her of her liberation when she was set free from slavery in Egypt. It was her fourth of July with a religious dimension. She had been delivered, not by patriots, but by the mighty hand of God. When an Israelite boy asked his father the meaning of their history, the answer was: "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand" (Deut. 6:21).

Exodus told of total liberation. The children of Israel were delivered economically and were then free to choose their own craft and trade. They were delivered politically and were free under God to fashion their

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

A Biblical Theology of Liberation Can Shed Light on the Issue

By Chevis F. Horne



"God seeks to break the powers that enslave whether they are spiritual, moral, intellectual, political, economic or social."

own political institutions. They were delivered socially to be no longer slaves but free people. They were delivered spiritually to become God's special people.

In the New Testament, the theme

of freedom gains momentum on a deeper level. Jesus Christ is the great liberator. Jesus said of himself, "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). It is true that his liberation is not as political as that of the Exodus. He does not deliver slaves from some oppressive government. He delivers from a deeper and more ultimate enslavement.

It can be said that he frees us from the bondage that lies back of

"The Bible is still being used to keep women in a kind of ecclesiastical bondage."

all forms of bondage—from sin and death. The misuse of power is responsible for bondage of all kinds, and back of this misuse of power is sin. Also, death accelerates the misuse of power, reminding us we don't have much time. What we do we must do quickly. Paul speaks of the deliverance from the bondage that lies back of bondage like this: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).

Yet we must not make the mistake of spiritualizing the freedom Christ gives so that it seems remote from the common bondages of life. He delivers us from all forms of enslavement. His liberation, when it has run its full course, delivers us not only from spiritual bondage but also from social, political and economic servitude.

The Bible, as the great book of liberation, tells the wonderful story of God's effort to set us free. When the Bible is used oppressively, as often it is, its truth is greatly distorted.

Misusing the Bible

The church has frequently misused the Bible, turning it into an instrument of oppression. It has been used to sanction some of the worst evils of history—war, slavery, racism

and discrimination against women, among others. This tragic truth should cause the church to weep.

The Bible has often been used as a tool of tyranny. It is still being used that way to keep women in a kind of ecclesiastical bondage. In many churches women cannot be deacons, and in still larger numbers they cannot be pastors. The pulpit is off limits to women. It seems whether or not God has called them is beside the point, for many churches will not call them.

Why do we distort and misuse the Bible? For three reasons basically. First, we bring a blind and irresponsible literalism to it. The Bible says what it says, we insist, and that's it. Second, we interpret the Bible outside a framework of grace. We come to it as legalists, and therefore we do not hear the overtures of grace sounded throughout the Bible. Third, rather than reading out the truth of the Bible, we read into it our own ideas. We hear the Bible say what we

want it to say. We make it reflect some personal, theological or cultural bias.

Women Pastors

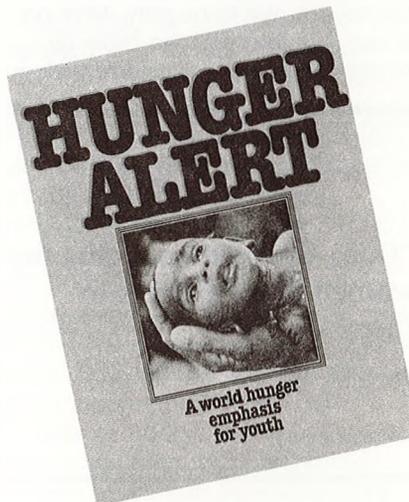
Years ago, business, industry, education, law, medicine and other professions opened their doors to women, and they have more than proven themselves worthy of the trust put in them. It is believed by some that before long we will have a woman as president of our nation.

Yet most of our churches will not open their pulpits to women, a reminder that often the church arrives late. Frequently it follows in the wake of secular forces that pave the way to a greater justice, freedom and humaneness. The church should really be first. It should be the engine pulling the positive social forces. But it is often pulled by them, and frequently comes screaming and kicking, holding back, dragging its feet.

Yet—and I am glad for this—this is

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not the whole picture. There are always going forth from our churches small vanguards to social frontiers, blazing new paths to a greater freedom and justice. They would be the first to tell you that they got their inspiration from the gospel preached by the church.

It is true that Paul says women should obey their husbands and not speak in the church. Many of us give lip service to this instruction but

“Has not God liberated women just as fully as he has men?”

violate it in actual life. What would happen to Southern Baptist churches if women were forbidden to speak? How crippled churches would be without Baptist Women, without the Sunday School classes women teach and without the committees they serve on. The truth is women are just as vocal as the men in our churches.

We should keep in mind the most important thing Paul ever said about this kind of problem: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Is Paul not saying that men and women, whom Christ has liberated, stand together on an equality in the church?

There are some searching questions we need to ask ourselves: Has not God liberated women just as fully as he has men? Does God withhold gifts from women that he offers to men? Do men have special endowment for the pulpit that women do not have? Does God call men to preach but not women?

The Local Church

The local church is the primary context within which we as Southern Baptists believe these questions should be answered. We have re-

jected historically both binding creeds and an authoritarian structure which decides the answers to such questions and then dispenses them to subordinate bodies and groups. Our firm belief in and commitment to the priesthood of the believer is accompanied by the awesome privilege and responsibility of interpreting the Bible and answering such questions for ourselves. We do this most frequently and effectively within the context of a local congregation, where we worship and pray and share and minister.

We as Southern Baptists have chosen an ecclesiology which is not foolproof. Within the context of the local church, racism was maintained and propagated. Slavery was defended. Discrimination was extolled. Militarism has often become dogma. Civil religion abounds.

But also within the context of the local church, the gospel has condemned racism. The abolition of alcohol has been preached. Prophetic voices have called for accountability in public life. Peace with justice has been proclaimed as not only God's ideal but also as an agenda for action.

Such is the nature of Southern Baptist life. We frequently differ on issues. We interpret the Bible differently on many points. We dialogue

“Does God withhold gifts from women that he offers to men?”

on these differences, often with great emotion. The goal of our dialogue is persuasion and clarification. Sometimes the dialogue produces agreement. Often it does not. When it does not, we cannot compel the other to behave as though he or she agrees with us.

Our Baptist distinctives of the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church require that we trust the empowering witness

of the Holy Spirit to lead our brothers and sisters into the fuller light of God's truth, even as we pray that he will also lead us.

I grew up in a small Baptist church

“Do men have special endowment for the pulpit that women do not have?”

in eastern North Carolina. While the church has never been big, it has always had an open, caring spirit. Two years ago Mintz Baptist called Paula Clayton as their pastor and became the first Southern Baptist church in North Carolina to have a woman pastor. Paula is a highly gifted young woman with a strong sense of calling.

Wonderful things have happened in that church since Paula has been its pastor. People are being won to Christ, lost members are being found and reactivated, the membership is growing not only in numbers but in spiritual maturity, young people are finding their church an exciting fellowship, and the church is bound together in a community of Christian love. The evidence seems to say clearly that Paula Clayton is the right person, in the right church, at the right time. Who would want to deny that?

My plea is that we properly use our Bible as the great book of liberation, that we be faithful to our theology of liberation, and that we be true to our Baptist distinctives of the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church as we deal with one of the most delicate and most important questions facing Southern Baptists. ■

Horne, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Martinsville, Va., was pastor of that congregation for 32 years. A native of North Carolina, he is a graduate of Wake Forest University and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has written Crisis in the Pulpit, Being Christian in Our Town and Dynamic Preaching.

ELECTION ISSUES

Want to Plug those Tax Loopholes? Here Are a Few Places to Start

By Larry D. Braidfoot

In case you haven't noticed, national elections are just a few weeks away. And economic issues are in the forefront of the political rhetoric.

Because of growing alarm over the size of federal budget deficits, the 1984 presidential campaign has been spiced by talk about tax reform, tax increases and revenue enhancements.

Candidate Mondale stated flatly that a tax increase would be needed in 1985. President/candidate Reagan was reported as saying he does not intend to propose a tax increase as the way to deal with budget deficits. Senator Dole and Vice-President Bush both stated that President Reagan had not foreclosed the possibility that a tax increase would be needed.

There is little doubt that Congress in 1985 will look at tax loopholes which might be closed in an attempt to raise new revenue. There are several loopholes I would suggest Congress review.

Consider first the matter of public relations expenses billed to the Defense Department by defense contractors. A defense contractor cannot bill the Defense Department for advertising expenses incurred to help sell products. But it can bill the Defense Department for public relations expenses. What is the difference? Public relations expenses are incurred in "enhancing the company's image."

Figures are unavailable on the amount of money for which the Defense Department is billed by defense contractors. But one check of 25 major defense contractors indicated that each firm had between one and four public relations firms on retainer, in addition to having a corporate public relations department.

With so much conversation going on about military spending, this kind

of expense needs to be examined. This should be a nonpartisan matter since the practice has been going on for two decades, too long to be easily laid to the blame of either

PART 2 In a Two-Part Series

Democrats or Republicans.

Consider next the matter of using farms as a method of sheltering income. Senator James Abdnor (R-S.D.) has introduced legislation to limit the amount of off-farm income which could be sheltered by using farming expenses to reduce taxable income.

Abdnor discovered that a recent study of 1976 tax returns indicated 12,000 separate "farmers" had reported farm losses in excess of \$50,000. Those 12,000 "farmers" had an average off-farm income of \$122,000 and an average farm loss of \$104,000. Thus they paid taxes on an adjusted gross income of \$16,302. He found another 24,000 "farmers" with losses ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000. These returns showed an average off-farm income of \$52,000 and an average farm loss of \$34,000, with an average adjusted gross income of only \$17,366.

Senator Abdnor has proposed a limit to the amount of off-farm income which can be sheltered by farm losses. He proposed that the limit be set at approximately \$23,600, the median household income. Closing these loopholes would produce an estimated \$2.6 billion in taxes, help stabilize farm land ownership, provide greater opportunity for the working farmer and produce a more stable level of agricultural production.

Some of my friends kid me these days about being obsessed with the

legalized gambling issue. I may be. But consider the financing of gambling facilities with tax shelters and industrial development bonds.

Tax-exempt industrial development bonds are a form of subsidy (they are tax free) which encourages the development of a business in an area needing industrial development. The bonds are sold to investors who are able to earn a return on their investment without having to pay taxes. At least four racetracks have been purchased, refurbished or built within the last 18 months with this kind of financing. You and I have subsidized the construction of these facilities through the tax system.

An Atlantic City casino which was floundering financially turned to a tax shelter arrangement as a means of infusing needed capital into the operation while retaining functional control of the casino. If the scheme works out, investors will recover their

"You and I have subsidized construction of racetracks through the tax system."

original investment in addition to tax savings which probably will surpass the investment. An investment of \$100,000 was expected to net a tax savings of \$125,000 and to have a stock value in excess of \$100,000 at the end of five years. That's not a loophole. It's a black (ink) hole!

So in the midst of election-year rhetoric, Christians need to keep their eyes open and ears tuned in. The difficulty with any kind of tax reform aimed at closing loopholes and enhancing revenues to close the budget deficit is the sustained activity of special-interest groups committed to preserving their special benefits. We need to ask questions of candidates, to seek the best information, to vote for economic responsibility and to work for sound economic policies. ■

Braidfoot is general counsel and director of Christian citizenship development for the Christian Life Commission.

**Population Pace:
218,100 A Day**

The earth is gaining 150 new persons per minute, 9,100 per hour, 218,100 per day and 79.6 million per year—and does so mostly in the nations least able to cope with the burden of added people to feed and clothe.

It was about 1830 before the earth's population reached 1 billion, and it was another century before the total was 2 billion. Since then, the acceleration has been staggering.

If you are 50 years old, the world's population has more than doubled in your lifetime, from 2.2 billion to more than 4.7 billion. By the time you reach age 65 in 1999, some 6 billion people will inhabit the planet, if the current growth rate of 1.7% a year holds. Nearly 5 billion of those persons will live in the less developed nations.

Countries expected to have the highest annual growth rate between now and year 2000: Kenya (4.0%), Algeria (3.3%), Nigeria, Tanzania and Iran (3.2%), Bangladesh (3.1%) and Sudan (3.0%).

—U.S. News & World Report

**Simple Health Care
Could Prevent Deaths**

Millions of unnecessary deaths worldwide could be prevented through simple, and relatively inexpensive, health care measures, a study by a Washington research group concluded.

"The rich die of heart disease and cancer, the poor die of diarrhea, pneumonia and measles," said William U. Chandler, a senior researcher at Worldwatch Institute, an independent, non-profit organization.

Chandler said major improvements in world health can be made with cost-effective preventive and primary care measures, including maternal and child care for the world's poorest people, clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, diet education and control of tobacco products.

—Associated Press

**Teenage Birthrate:
Children of Children**

The United States has the highest teenage birthrate of any industrial nation. The statistics are shocking:

- In 1980 there were 562,330 babies in the U.S. born to teen mothers, a rate of 1,540 babies per day, about 64 an hour.
- Half of these children were born to unmarried mothers and nearly 10,000 to girls 14 or younger.
- In all, counting abortions and estimated miscarriages, there were 1.11 million teen pregnancies in 1980.
- Out-of-wedlock teen births tripled between 1960 and 1980.

"Too often, a child having a child becomes a prescription for a life of dependency and poverty.

"To understand poverty in America, one must first understand this phenomenon of out-of-wedlock births. By 1981, there were 686,605 births to unwed mothers—up 72 percent since 1970. Nearly 40 percent of these births were to teenagers. Today, more than one of every two poor families with children under 18 resides in a home headed by a single mother.

"More than half of all women on welfare began as teenage mothers. And although the number of teen births

among whites is rising faster than among blacks, black teens are five times as likely to give birth out of wedlock."

—Parade Magazine

**Boating and Drinking
Don't Mix Either**

If the statistics on drunk driving are enough to make you think about selling your car, then you might want to list your boat in the want ads, too.

A statistical analysis by a New York insurance company revealed that two of every three boating fatalities are alcohol related. In some areas of the country, almost two-fifths of the skippers involved in fatal boating accidents were legally intoxicated at the time of the accident.

About half of the fatalities occur in calm water under good weather conditions. Ninety percent of the accidental deaths involve small boats.

—The Commercial (Pine Bluff, Ark.)

**Living Together
A Popular Option**

The number of unmarried couples living together has more than tripled since 1970, the Census Bureau reported.

The bureau said there were 1.89 million unmarried households in 1983, more than three times the number in 1970. In 1983, about one in 25 couples living together was not married.

The number of unmarried households zoomed during the 1970s, but the rate of increase has slowed in the early 1980s.

The study also found that more young adults are choosing to live with their parents. Only 45% of the nation's 18-to-34-year-olds were married and living in their own homes in 1983, compared with 56% in 1970, the bureau said.

The author of the report cited an increase in the cost of living as a primary factor in the change: "It's cheaper to live with parents."

—The Washington Post

"APPLYING THE GOSPEL IN THE LOCAL CHURCH"

**Christian Life Commission
1985 National Seminar**

March 25-27

**The Hilton
Fort Worth, Texas**

Reserve these dates now on your 1985 calendar. And look for information in the November/December issue of LIGHT on how you can register for this important, three-day conference.

**'Sporting' News
Trivia Question**

O.K., all you sports enthusiasts, see how well you do on this not-so-trivial trivia question: What is the most popular spectator sport in the U.S.?

Baseball? Wrong.

Football? Nope.

Basketball? Wrong again.

The answer: horse racing.

Every year for the last three decades, more people have paid their way into the track than have attended any of the

popular team sports.

The reason is simple, and it's not the esthetic pleasure of seeing powerful animals in graceful motion. It's gambling: the chance of making a quick bundle, that one big killing.

Robert Custer, a Veterans Administration psychiatrist and an expert on the subject, says compulsive gambling is strikingly similar to a drug habit.

"It is probably one of the purest forms of psychological addiction known," he claims. "Compulsive gamblers are stimulated by gambling, get high on it, and have withdrawal symptoms when they stop."

—Psychology Today

Hunger Can Be Eradicated

Hunger and malnutrition "can be eradicated in our time," concluded the World Food Council at its 10th ministerial session in Addis Ababa.

The WFC said ample food is produced globally for all the world's people but that more international cooperation is needed to get the food to the places where it is needed. Among the problems to be solved: trade protectionism, pricing problems, high interest rates and general economic conditions of many Third

World nations.

Although the world is feeding nearly 1,000 million more people today than 10 years ago, there remain "hundreds of millions of hungry and malnourished people," the WFC observed.

—Baptist World Alliance

Black Males' Problems Affect Family Crises

Serious, often life-threatening risks confronting black males today are contributing to the "crisis which black families now face," according to a report from the National Urban League.

The high attrition rate for black males "finally results in an insufficient number of men who are willing and able to provide support for women and children in a family setting," the report concluded.

The statistical picture of risks facing black men includes the following:

- Black couples are separated at a rate five times that of whites.
- Black men have a life expectancy of 65.5 years, compared with 70.5 for white males.
- Black males die from accidents and violence at 1.5 times the rate of white males.
- Black men die from homicide at six times the rate of white males.

- In 1978, 38% of men in jail were black and three-quarters of them were under 30.
- More than 2 million black men were arrested in 1981, one of every three arrests in the nation.
- Two million black men, or 29% of all black men between 20 and 64, were unemployed or not in the work force at all in 1982.

—The Washington Post

Violent Crimes Decrease in '83

Violent crime in the U.S.—rapes, robberies and assaults—dropped nearly 10% in 1983, the largest decrease in six years, the Justice Department reported.

The overall rate for serious crime, which also includes household burglaries, personal larcenies and car thefts, declined 7%. The statistics do not include murder.

Violent crimes were inflicted upon an average of 30.9 of every 1,000 persons in the country in 1983, down from 34.3 in 1982. Only rapes increased, from 0.8 to 0.9 for every 1,000 persons.

Household burglaries dropped another 8.9% from the record low in 1982 to 71.2 per 1,000 persons in 1983.

—The Washington Post

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CASE IN POINT

As a symbol of a shared commitment to peace with justice, 16 churches in the Charlotte area of North Carolina agreed to "worship together" August 6 for the Southern Baptist Convention's inaugural observance of the Day of Prayer for

World Peace.

Though it was impossible for all 16 congregations to gather together physically as one body, each church included in its worship service the same call to worship and responsive reading (reprinted below).

Responsive Reading

Leader: We are called to proclaim the truth. Let us, together, with congregations gathered across this country this day proclaim Peace with Justice. And let us believe:

It is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and be lost—

People: This is true: There is a future for the children of peace.

Leader: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—

People: This is true: The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces and will remove disgrace of people from all the earth.

Leader: It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay forever—

People: This is true: The Lord foils the plans of the nations and thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of the heart of the Lord through all generations.

Leader: It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—

People: This is true: The Lord gives strength to the people of God; the Lord blesses us with peace.

Leader: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church, before we can do anything—

People: This is true: This is what the Lord says: I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit.

Leader: It is not true that our dreams for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—

People: This is true: The hour comes, and now is, that the true worshippers shall worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. They are the kind of worshippers God seeks.

All: So let us dream, let us prophesy; let us see visions of love. And let us seek peace and justice with humility, with joy, and faith, and with courage.

—Adapted from address by Allan Boesak, Summer 1983

ETHICS LIBRARY

Church and Family Growing Together, by John C. Howell. Broadman Press, 1984. Howell has been on the cutting edge in developing effective patterns of Christian ministry to couples, parents and children, single adults and senior adults. This is a synthesis of his best thinking and experience. It combines thorough biblical and ethical perspectives with solid experiences in conducting family ministry programs in local churches. It contains ample discussion of the theory and practice of family ministry and full descriptions of how to implement these ideas, including charts, surveys, programs and resources. This is required reading for anyone serious about developing a strong ministry to families.

—Douglas L. Anderson

The Christian as a Consumer, by Denise George. Westminster Press, 1984. Not primarily theological or philosophical but personal and practical in approach. Avoids the guilt trip without avoiding the hard questions. A useful primer, especially for laypersons, that also points to other, more substantive resources such as the writings of Ron Sider. Includes a section on simpler lifestyle, recognizing that the motivation for living with less is to be able to share more. One of the "Potentials" series edited by Wayne Oates, this book is a refreshing alternative to the stuff that stocks most bookstore shelves today.

—David Wilkinson

Anderson supervises the family ministry department of the Baptist Sunday School Board.



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