

# Light

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST CONVENTION

APRIL 1985

## RESOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY

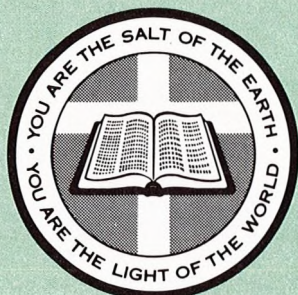
**A Look at SBC Resolutions  
and Ethical Issues  
1954-1984**



**2 Valentine's Viewpoint****3 "Resolving" the Issues****5 Africa's Food Crisis****6 Hunger Gifts by States****8 Beyond the Bus Tours****10 Book Reviews****10 Moral Scene**

*LIGHT*, a Christian ethics publication for pastors, teachers, state and national denominational workers, and other persons with special interest in applied Christianity, is published 10 times a year by the Christian Life Commission. *LIGHT* is sent free to individuals who request it. *Voluntary subscriptions, for persons who wish to help defray costs for printing and mailing and to help underwrite a growing mailing list, are \$5.00 annually (10 issues).* Checks should be made payable to *LIGHT*. Your cancelled check will serve as your tax deductible receipt.

©1985 Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention  
Foy Valentine, Executive Director  
David R. Wilkinson, Editor  
Duann Kier, Editorial Secretary



**Christian Life  
Commission  
Of The Southern  
Baptist Convention**

901 Commerce, #550  
Nashville, TN 37203-3620

## A Case for Continuing

Eric Hoffer noted in his journal, *Before the Sabbath*, that the day before he died in 1919, Pierre "Renoir painted anemones with a brush strapped to his crippled fingers. When he finished he said, 'I am beginning to learn how to paint anemones.' On his deathbed Michelangelo said to Cardinal Salivati: 'I regret that I die just as I am beginning to learn the alphabet of my profession' . . . . Not long before his death Adam Smith observed that after all his practice in writing he composed as slowly and with as much difficulty as he had at first."

**There is a time, of course, for rest and relaxation.** Even God, after working six days, rested on the seventh. On the eighth day, however, he was hard at it again: Adam and Eve had to be run out of the garden, Noah had to be taught ship building, Moses had to be given speech lessons, Jonah had to be jettisoned, Israel had to be winnowed.

In the incarnation, God's active involvement in human affairs reached a new level of intensity. "My father is working still," Jesus said, "and I am working" (John 5:17). Even after Jesus said his awesome word, "It is finished," God's work had to go on. Now the Holy Spirit is making on humanity's behalf those never-ending "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26), those soul cries at reality's deepest level seeking to bring each of us and all creation to at-onement with the Creator who is working to become the Author and Finisher of our faith.

**The people of God are not** only compelled but are also empowered both to keep going on and to go on with the elan or ardor or spirit that comes from knowledge that the best is yet to be. Christians could never be justified in throwing in the sponge, quitting the battle, or growing weary in well doing; nor could we ever be justified in pursuing our special calling to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth with anything less than authentic missionary zeal.

When interruptions everlastingly set our agendas, let us remember that even Emerson never was able to write a book but that he nevertheless made a mark.

**When the little foxes gnaw** and spoil our vines (Song of Solomon 2:15), let us see that we can plant instead a patch of wheat where those vineyards were and that whole wheat bread is better for us anyhow than the fruit of the vine would have been.

When the storms of life are raging, let us remember that life's best rainbows come while the last part of the rain is still falling.

When the cold, hard realities of life in this kind of world close in on us, let us remember that deeply despondent Tchaikovsky waded out into the Moskva River's icy waters hoping to catch pneumonia and die but that a kindly Providence chose for him to survive and compose three of his greatest symphonies.

**When the world keeps fooling** with our horizontal knob and the picture of life rolls crazily, let us remember that we have an everpresent Technician to straighten us out, a Fixer who knows all about our circuitry and who wills for us good reception and a clear picture.

When the committee work that enfeebls the mind, interminable meetings that agonize the anatomy, and deadlines that quench the spirit all conspire to eat our lunch, let us remember that under all the overburden of all these daily tasks, God has long since stored the oil of joy and gladness and fulfillment and victory which is ours as we will drill for it.

Who can count himself to have apprehended? Who has it made? Who is able to park life's car?

Being genuinely alive calls for stretching, moving, seeing, trying, visioning, reaching, correcting, imagining, doing, continuing.

*Foy Valentine*

Foy Valentine  
Executive Director

# RESOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY

## "Be it Resolved": SBC Resolutions and Ethical Issues, 1954 to 1984

By William M. Tillman, Jr.

Resolutions in the fashion we now think of them are by no means a recent phenomenon for the Southern Baptist Convention.

In the 1888 convention, the president, J.P. Boyce, ruled out of order two resolutions related to temperance. Both rulings were sustained by the convention messengers. The very next year, however, a resolution on liquor traffic was introduced and adopted. Not many years passed before this very issue was given more prominent attention. Among other things, the convention established the Standing Committee on Temperance.

Even casual observers of SBC resolutions through the years will recognize that many of our resolutions have dealt with ethical matters. In the '50s about one third of convention resolutions adopted addressed social and moral issues. The '60s showed a movement to half or more of the resolutions falling in the ethical issues category.

Many Southern Baptists still believe ethics and evangelism have little or nothing to do with one another or that the gospel has no social dimension. Yet that is not what we have been saying with our resolutions. Of course, it is possible that we have only been *speaking* about ethical matters—tipping our hat to the issues through non-binding resolutions adopted by messengers to the annual sessions of the convention—without following up our words with concrete actions.

The practice of presenting resolutions has grown, especially in the survey's time span, to a point where at times this process has overshadowed the rest of the annual con-

vention's work. In 1954, for instance, only six resolutions were adopted. That total stayed about the same until 1968 when the number adopted jumped to 12. In 1972, a barrage of 22 were adopted. That total was not reached again until 1978. But the

### PART ONE In a Two-Part Series

pattern of the next four years—1979 (21); 1980 (27, the all-time high); 1981 (18); and 1982 (21)—shows more resolutions presented and adopted than ever before or since.

During this 30-year period, the by-law description of the Resolutions Committee has undergone considerable change. Changes have come as to when the president appoints the committee, how many members the committee has, how and when resolutions are submitted to the committee and what the committee's responsibilities are.

From 1954 until 1958, the convention president was obliged to appoint a committee of five members on the convention's first day. The committee was responsible for receiving resolutions and reporting back to the convention with or without recommendation or amendment.

In 1960, a word change came which said the president was to appoint a committee of 10 members, "three of whom shall be members of the Executive Committee." By 1961, the president was to appoint the committee "in conference with the vice-presidents."

Other major changes came in this committee's work in 1971. The president was instructed to appoint the committee "at least sixty (60) days in advance of the Convention . . ." Also, it was requested "that copies of proposed resolutions be submitted to the committee chairman thirty (30) days before the Convention in order to make possible more thorough consideration and to expedite the committee's work."

By 1982 the president was asked to release all committee members' names, including members of the resolutions committee, to Baptist Press 30 days before the convention.

Appointments to the 1984 committee were given to Baptist Press at least 45 days in advance of the convention. These names also were published in the first issue of the convention *Bulletin*.

The resolutions presented by the committee and approved by convention messengers from 1954 to 1984 have dealt with a wide variety of issues. At the risk of simply compiling a laundry list, the following section reviews the major ethical areas treated by resolutions during this period. One criterion used was if six or more resolutions dealt with a particular area.

**Alcohol.** Here is a perennial issue addressed through resolutions. Beverage use, advertisement, a surgeon general statement about hazards of alcohol and drunk driving have all been covered.

**Abortion.** In a little over a decade this issue has assumed increasing prominence in SBC conversation and, as much as any social issue, it has become for many the test issue of faith and ethical orthodoxy.

**Family Life and Human Sexuality.** Family planning, sex education, the White House Conference on Families and a few resolutions on homosexuality were major areas. One might be surprised by how our "family resolution graph" would indicate that Southern Baptists have either assumed much about family life, known little about the issues or have intended to do little about them.

**Pornography.** Mail order business, mass media and cable TV are a few



of the issues considered in resolutions in this category. Here Southern Baptists have shown a consistent opposition. A curious resolution in 1974 reaffirmed the 1953, 1959, and 1968 resolutions related to pornography. For good measure, the 1968 resolution reaffirmed a 1965 resolution on obscenity.

**Race Relations.** A rather large group of resolutions in this area have covered a variety of topics from racial prejudice in general to the KKK in particular. Some have focused attention on relations with groups other than Blacks. On the one hand, some observers will be surprised by the extent to which various conventions have spoken about race. On the other hand, Southern Baptists have failed to voice much concern about some important facets of human relations.

**The Christian and the State.** Far and away the subject which has been addressed most is that of the Christian and the State. It would be easier to hit a year when it was *not* mentioned than to list those when it was treated. Depending on how one counts these, more than 60 such resolutions were adopted during the period studied. The majority were expressions about religious liberty.

If one wanted a short course on the principle of religious liberty and its corollary, the separation of church and state, then he or she should study this time period's resolutions. Several resolutions, of course, were general statements reaffirming the historic Baptist perspective. But, particularly toward the end of the survey time, more facets of religious liberty and church and state were considered. Attention was given to prayer in public schools, support for private church schools, tuition tax credits and the Lord's Day observance.

Interestingly, this area reflects a change in consistency. Toward the end of the '70s and into the '80s, resolutions began to appear supporting private church schools—an unprecedented position in convention resolutions. In 1982 a resolution passed opposing tuition tax credits. Yet another resolution adopted by the same convention supported a constitutional prayer amendment. In 1983 the convention opposed the appointment of a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

At best, one could interpret these examples as inconsistency. At worst, they appear to be a visible sign of the erosion of the theological, philosophical and practical underpinnings of religious liberty. Our

interests appear more sectarian as we head out of the 20th century.

**War and Peace.** To some degree Southern Baptists have been unfairly collared with a bad reputation when it comes to attention to this area. True, when the U.S. has been at war, we have tended to sound very hawkish. However, interspersed through 1954-1984 are several resolutions which make very sound, and sometimes prophetic, pleas for the cause of peace. There is reservation of sentiment for conscientious objectors, but some room is left for them.

**Potpourri.** Several resolutions have no particular categorical fit. Some have treated violence and disregard for the law; some attention has been given to prison and judicial reform. Interest in television morality seemed to come and go quickly. Only five resolutions (four since 1980) have passed which deal with the issue area of women; this subject undoubtedly will receive additional attention in the future. Some treatment has been given the handicapped, but not in the last four years. Interestingly, Communism was the subject of only two specific resolutions during this period. Human rights got some passing attention.

**World Hunger.** This area was addressed by six resolutions (all falling between 1975 and 1982). This seems interesting in light of the growing Southern Baptist response to this need in recent years. With this moral issue there has been an identifiable cause and effect relationship between convention attention through resolutions and Southern Baptist interest and involvement in response to the issue.

Indeed, it can be argued that resolutions on the issue of world hunger have produced more immediate and dramatic impact on the denomination than those dealing with any other ethical concern. ■



*"RESOLVING" THE ISSUES—Messengers to last year's Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City queue up at one of the mikes during floor debate. (Baptist Press photo)*

*Tillman is assistant professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was assisted in the research for this article by his brother Jeff, an M.Div. student at Southwestern.*

# UNDERSTANDING the AFRICA CRISIS

## The Consequences of Military Strife

By Robert Parham

A third of all Africans today face a crisis of hunger. It is a crisis which already has claimed the lives of five million children, damaged seriously the physical and mental health of another five million children and created five million refugees.

**Recurring explanations** for the desperate state of tens of millions of Africans are overpopulation, declining food production and drought. Africa's population is growing at an annual rate of 2.7 percent, whereas many Western nations grow at a rate of 1.0 percent or less.

Simultaneously, the continent's per capita food production has fallen by 10 percent in the last decade. Drought compounds the crisis. The Sahara Desert marches southward seven to ten miles annually, while the Kalahari Desert gobbles up land in southern Africa. Some areas have been without rain for three years.

These recurring explanations authentically, but incompletely, address the causes of the hunger crisis. An additional and often overlooked explanation is the role of military strife which is riveted in the politics of colonialism.

**When the European colonial powers met in Berlin, Germany, in 1884-1885, they haphazardly carved up Africa.** German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's attitude characterized the disposition of the other national leaders when he stated: "My map of Africa lives in Europe."

The topographers of Europe ignored African states and tribal (ethnic) boundaries and pursued their nation's self-interests. Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium all took varying slices of Africa. With names like French Equatorial Africa, German Kamerun, and Italian Somaliland, the Europeans tattooed Africa.

When the Berlin conference ended, African tribes (ethnic groups)

were divided and/or forced together. In southern Africa, the Ovambo were split into two separate nations: Angola and Namibia. In central Africa, the Bakongo were divided among the nations of Congo, Zaire, and Angola. In East Africa, the Masai were separated into the nations of Kenya and Tanzania. In West Africa, tribal groups were forced to unite. Ibobs and Yorubas were thrown in with Hausas and Fulanis.

**The unification of tribes** with ancient conflictual relationships and stubborn ethnic loyalties offered no basis upon which to build modern nation-states. The geopolitically insensitive European boundaries prepared Africa for intense struggles for national unity during the later half of the 20th century.

The arrival of independence forced the relatively new nations to stand

upon their own feet. Some colonial powers had worked to prepare Sub-Saharan Africa for independence. Others had not.

Belgium did little, if anything, to prepare Zaire. France angrily withdrew from Guinea, taking everything movable. Portugal utterly abandoned Mozambique. On their way out, the Portuguese destroyed industrial equipment, ripped out phone lines, and even drove tractors into the Mozambique Channel. Twelve university graduates were left to govern 10 million people.

**As the colonial powers departed,** the superpowers docked around the continent. The East-West conflict invaded another sphere of the globe. African nations aligned and then realigned themselves with the superpowers. One of the most recent and poignant examples occurred in the Horn of Africa. The Soviet naval base in Somalia was replaced by the American rapid deployment base.

A similar flip-flop happened in Ethiopia. Although Ethiopia successfully fought off European colonization, it did become a sphere of superpower influence. Emperor Haile Selassie ruled Ethiopia like a feudal

### WHERE MILITARY MEN HOLD POWER IN BLACK AFRICA



SOURCE: Los Angeles Times, Dec. 18, 1984



lord and exploited the nation's farmers. He succeeded in making Ethiopia the largest recipient of U.S. military aid in Africa following World War II. In the early 1970s, Ethiopia experienced its most devastating famine of the century. Two hundred thousand Ethiopians died because Emperor Selassie suppressed information about the famine. The famine and stagnant economy led to his overthrow and replacement by a socialist oriented government now under Soviet influence.

In the midst of the political turmoil rooted in unrealistic national boundaries, inadequate preparation for independence and superpower competition, no single African institution or factor has had the power to hold together a nation. Economic institutions, ethnic loyalties, religious

---

### Explanations often overlook the role of military strife, riveted in the politics of colonialism.

---

affiliations, social patterns, and political ideologies have lacked the bonding strength.

The one exception has been the military. The military has become a key to African nationhood. Paradoxically, it also has become a key factor in the hunger crisis.

Military conflict and civil strife have ravaged Africa. Since Ghana, the first independent Sub-Saharan nation, gained its independence in 1957, Africa has experienced over 70 military coup d'etats, 12 wars, and 13 assassinations of heads of state.

Of the 28 nations currently facing a crisis of hunger, battles rage in five of them. The Ethiopian government fights two guerrilla groups in the northern part of the country. Both the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigrey People's Liberation Front are fighting for independence. Insurgency warfare exists in southern Sudan. A 13-year-old civil war continues in Chad. Six hundred thousand Angolians have been displaced by the state of war which exists in the Moxico province of Angola. In the northwestern region called Tete, the Mozambique

National Resistance wars against the Mozambique government.

Besides these five nations, seven Sub-Saharan countries are trying to cope with the spillover of civil war and political strife. Sudan not only has its own insurrection movement, but has hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring in from Ethiopia and Chad. Somalia still has a half-million Somalians from the 1977-1978 Ethiopia-Somalia war living in refugee camps. The Central African Republic, in less than three months, has been flooded with an estimated 25,000 refugees fleeing from the strife in Chad.

Zaire and Rwanda host an estimated 50,000 refugees from the turmoil in Uganda. Zaire carries the additional burden of 280,000 refugees from Angola. Similarly, Zambia has experienced an influx of 100,000 persons displaced by the fighting in Angola. Zimbabwe has become an escape valve for Mozambicans.

The African hunger crisis is multi-dimensional and denies the temptation of simple answers. The crisis is not simply the lack of rain or overpopulation. The crisis is not just a matter of poor economic choices. The crisis has deep historical roots, one of which is clearly military strife riveted in the politics of colonialism.

Nations of the Northern Hemisphere have contributed to the creation of the crisis and have a moral responsibility to make a long-term commitment, like the Marshall Plan, to work with Africans to resolve the crisis and to establish self-reliant nations. Beyond the moral imperative, the nations of the Northern Hemisphere are driven by pragmatic necessities to work with Africans to keep the continent from slipping into a profound crisis unparalleled in Western history since the 14th-century Plague.

Until massive, cooperative international action is taken, the African hunger crisis will continue to exist as an offspring of injustice and a parent to further injustice and military strife. ■

---

*Parham, director of hunger concerns for the Christian Life Commission, grew up in Africa where his parents served as Southern Baptist agricultural missionaries to Nigeria.*

## HUNGER GIFTS TOP \$7.1 MILLION

### State-By-State Picture

Prompted by dramatic television pictures of starving Ethiopians and ongoing awareness and educational emphases within their denomination, Southern Baptists in 1984 gave \$7,166,772 to the Southern Baptist Convention's program of worldwide hunger relief.

The total shattered the 1983 record of \$5,996,000 and represented an 18.5 percent increase over that year.

Prior to the international media attention on the African hunger crisis, Southern Baptist contributions for overseas hunger relief were up about four percent for the first 10 months of 1984, compared to the same period in 1983, reported John Cheyne, the Foreign Mission Board's senior human needs consultant. But the fall media story and the convention's World Hunger Day emphasis sponsored by the Christian Life Commission pushed contributions dramatically higher. The heaviest giving each year has been recorded in November and December following World Hunger Day, observed by most Southern Baptist churches in October.

The 1984 figures reflect only contributions given for hunger to the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board and do not include monies given for hunger relief that were used in local churches, associations and state conventions.

Once again Texas led all state conventions in hunger contributions with a total of \$1,201,767. Conventions with the largest percentage increases over the previous year were Tennessee, followed by Arkansas, Alaska, Pennsylvania-South Jersey, Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland and Oklahoma. A few state conventions actually experienced percentage decreases in hunger giving.

Several conventions in the last year implemented the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention recommendation of an 80/20 division of undesignated hunger gifts between the Foreign Mission Board (80%) and

the Home Mission Board (20%).

Some confusion still exists among many Southern Baptists over the Foreign Mission Board's categories of hunger relief and general relief. Money given for "hunger relief" goes

only for food and food-related items, whereas money designated for "hunger and relief" or "general relief" goes for disaster relief, medicine, clothing and other human needs.

Despite some problems related to "growing pains," the record 1984 hunger contributions signal the deepening commitment Southern Baptists have to feeding hungry people. ■

## FOR THE RECORD

### 1984 World Hunger Receipts by States

State	Domestic (HMB)	Overseas (FMB)	Total	1983 Total	% Increase/Decrease
Ala.	\$2,924	\$507,384	\$510,308	\$456,785	11.7%
Alaska	1,196	5,931	7,127	3,405	109.3
Ariz.	3,293	19,382	22,675	16,252	39.5
Ark.	7,779	55,474	63,253	28,345	123.2
Calif.	629	102,592	103,221	86,016	20.7
Colo.	341	20,358	20,699	16,721	23.8
D.C.	NA	6,163	6,163	9,137	[-48.3]
Fla.	45,981	294,581	340,562	312,356	9.0
Ga.	105,623	479,807	585,430	459,571	27.4
Hawaii	1,739	15,570	17,309	NA	NA
Ill.	11,839	64,414	76,253	60,725	25.6
Ind.	60	40,821	40,881	20,431	99.9
Iowa	612	NA	612	NA	NA
Kan.-Neb.	3,639	22,063	25,702	26,873	[-4.4]
Ky.	1,933	636,428	638,361	365,566	74.6
La.	35,598	189,699	225,297	172,420	30.7
Md.	1,056	40,589	41,645	26,481	57.3
Mich.	NA	5,749	5,749	4,001	43.7
Minn.-Wis.	10	4,056	4,066	NA	NA
Miss.	758	234,799	235,557	204,694	15.1
Mo.	57,846	264,898	322,744	271,689	18.8
Nev.	NA	1,334	1,334	NA	NA
N. Eng.	1,899	16,844	18,743	NA	NA
N.M.	50	36,298	36,348	41,580	[-14.4]
N.Y.	680	11,525	12,205	NA	NA
N.C.	110,942	709,942	820,884	839,867	[-2.3]
No. Plains	678	2,583	3,261	4,173	[-21.9]
Ohio	323	31,572	31,895	18,644	71.1
Okla.	25,018	152,881	177,899	123,318	44.3
Ore./Wash.	60	31,022	31,082	30,453	2.1
Pa.-So. Jersey	1,261	10,579	11,840	5,818	103.5
S.C.	56,001	600,654	656,655	597,812	9.8
Tenn.	16,272	155,694	171,966	62,220	176.4
Texas	18,696	1,183,071	1,201,767	1,132,797	6.1
Utah-Idaho	25	1,721	1,746	1,591	9.7
Va.	102,285	555,450	657,735	540,318	21.7
W.Va.	NA	8,341	8,341	4,431	88.2
Wyo.	375	2,693	3,068	NA	NA
Other States	NA	5,591	6,041	39,604	[-84.7]

Compiled from information provided by the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Boards. Figures rounded to the nearest dollar. The FMB also received \$20,351 from foreign countries.

(NA—Not Available)



# BEYOND the BUS TOURS

## Southern Baptists Must Take A New Look at the Cities

By Bill and Kathy Berry

"Driver, 7th Street and Avenue B, please."

The cabby turns around and after a moment of staring in disbelief says, "Mister, are you sure you want to go down there? Hey, I'll get you close, but there ain't no way I'm going into that neighborhood after dark."

The Lower East Side of New York City (Manhattan) is an area that is carefully bypassed in the standard glass-protected, air-conditioned bus tour of New York.

**Divided into several** sections, each with a different ethnic minority, the community's hardness from poverty cannot escape you. From crumbling buildings to litter strewn streets, from needle-tracked arms to hungry stares, the haze of poverty is captivating.

Graffiti Baptist Ministry, where we were pastor/directors for two and a half years, is located in a section of the Lower East Side called Losida by many Hispanic residents and Alphabet Land by junkies (made up of Avenues A, B, C and D). The Home Mission Board, Baptist Convention of New York and Metropolitan New York Baptist Association sponsor Graffiti Baptist Ministry, a presence in this community for nearly a decade.

One of the last footholds of low-cost private housing in Manhattan, the Lower East Side is truly urban in character. The neighborhood is practically a stereotype of the bombed-out inner-city ghetto that gets highlighted occasionally in

election-year media coverage.

The people are primarily Puerto Rican. Some work, but most are unemployable because they lack skills or education, or have parenting responsibilities or physical impairments. Some are unemployed because of ethnic prejudice.

**A pocket of** crumbling, abandoned buildings, the neighborhood attracts many of the city's estimated 40,000 homeless persons who find shelter in corners of the building shells. On occasion you can see the dim light from a candle floating through the night-darkened halls as someone seeks a place to rest. Of course, that light could just as easily be a junkie looking for a "safe" place to recharge his body.

There are cycles in a community such as this, but they are not the cycles of life most of us generally think of.

**Unable to find work**, a family is forced onto welfare. Unable to stretch the welfare checks and food stamps to feed everyone, the family gets hungry. Some people swallow their pride and turn for help to church-run food pantries or soup lines. Others turn to more profitable, but illegal, employment.

Running dope brings in good money, but if you get hooked on drugs, you need still more money. So crimes, including armed robbery, mugging and breaking and entering, become part of the cycle. The violence comes almost naturally. Often innocent victims are hurt as

flying bullets seem to be no respecter of persons.

**The cycle continues** downward for someone who is addicted. Scrounging for a buck, even if it is just to get one bottle of Thunderbird, easily makes a person desperate. Often this person ends up on the streets with no place to go and no apparent way out.

Many of the people we encountered while at Graffiti seemed as if they were perched precariously at the edge of an abyss—waiting for that last clod of dirt that prevented them from falling in to give way. Spiraling down, they would soon reach the pit's bottom. To many people, this plunge seemed inevitable; they simply waited for the bottom to rush up to greet them.

The question we continually asked ourselves was, "What can we do for these people to pull them back from the edge of the abyss that threatens to swallow them up? How can we help them stand on solid ground?"

Temptation offered us an easy answer, simply *telling* them of the Good News, or "planting a church." But churches, including evangelical congregations, already were there. Although not Southern Baptist, they had taken the same approach that we Southern Baptists often take in urban settings: pick an area "ripe to harvest" and evangelize. Sometimes this strategy is followed without consideration for the community's unique needs.

**Too often we come** to save these "lost souls" with our prepackaged, "lily-white" programs. But these sure-fired, homegrown methods for church growth sometimes don't work, and we don't know what to do. Some conclude the people's hearts must be made of stone. But could it be that part of our problem is that we don't understand the people we seek to serve?

The attitude many Southern Baptists have toward cities and the people in those cities is based on cop shows and newspaper headlines. Cities become a gray mass of foreboding concrete, ready at once to stifle life and crush unsuspecting visitors. Urban areas are seen as teeming mixtures of alien sights and smells trapped within a haze of smog.



Most Southern Baptists feel like strangers in a foreign land when in a big city. Our traditional Baptist roots go deep into rural soil, where life springs forth from the dirt, not concrete. For many of us, America's urban centers are not only foreign but evil.

Yet the challenge of the gospel calls us to involvement in *all* the world, including the cities. The roots of God's kingdom lie in *persons*, not in culturally-shaped attitudes.

**The love that** Christ demands doesn't come through being an observer of the urban poor, but through being a participant with them in their struggles. We will always be outsiders until we are willing to cross the barriers that prevent us from being one with them.

Whether the barriers are racial or economic, as long as it is "us" and "them" we will fall short in demonstrating God's love. It is because God became flesh and took up residence with us that we can truly say Christ is one with us.

As we lived and worked with the people of the Lower East Side, it didn't take long to recognize the

---

### Many of our attitudes toward cities are based on cop shows and newspaper headlines.

---

many physical, emotional and spiritual problems: hunger, malnutrition, loneliness, poor education, abuse and neglect, homelessness, rape, drug addiction, prostitution, unemployment, inadequate housing, exploitation, violence, illiteracy, alcoholism; the list seemed to grow daily. If we are to be faithful to the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, then we must seek to minister to whole persons, applying the scriptures to every area of a person's life.

**At Graffiti Baptist** Ministry we faced overwhelming needs with extremely inadequate resources. After paying monthly maintenance bills on the storefront property restored from rubble to decency by scores of Baptist volunteers over the years, very little was left to work with.



This situation of limited resources is repeated over and over again in large urban areas. If we are serious about showing God's love to people in the world, we must understand that some places will require more commitment of lives and money.

**Unfortunately,** the worth of any ministry is too often measured by statistical results. We often demand a tangible return on our investment, forgetting that our standards of measurement may not apply outside the Southern Baptist-dominated South. Giving and personal involvement should be based on God's calling in response to human need.

Trying to be Christian in our neighborhood meant a concerted effort to meet people's physical and spiritual needs. For the hungry, we fed them; for the homeless, we tried to find shelter; for the addicted, we counseled and helped find rehabilitation programs.

**We provided Bible** studies for the spiritually poor, tutoring for the uneducated and after-school programs for lonely children with no place to go. Yet what we did was never as important as how we did it.

The compassion of Christ is made up of love and acceptance. That was our goal. No matter who you were or how you came, we tried to accept you. A look around our Bible study group on any Wednesday night would find blacks, whites, Hispanics, employed and unemployed people, homosexuals, "straight" people, junkies, alcoholics, Jews, Christians,

Muslims, atheists, male prostitutes, female prostitutes. Each person had one thing in common: each was trying to find meaning in life.

They were there not because of a scripture verse someone had quoted to them or because of the music and fancy decor; they were there because someone dared to love and accept them as they were.

What we found the hurting people of the Lower East Side needed was someone to listen without condemnation to their life stories. They needed someone willing to say, "Let's walk together as we both try to discover who *God* wants us to be."

**Graffiti is a ragtag** group of real people drawn together by the joy of community. It lives with the hope that by joining hands together while striving daily toward Christ-likeness, someone will be pulled back from the edge of the abyss. The darkness of the pit that threatens to swallow persons in despair can be changed to the light that illuminates the security of solid ground.

As one young junkie said after visiting Graffiti Bible study for the first time, "I'm a nobody, and I know everybody in this room—you're a bunch of nobodies, too. But tonight you sure have made me feel like somebody." ■

---

*Bill Berry is now a consultant in the area of missions for the National Student Ministries department of the Baptist Sunday School Board. Kathy is a free-lance writer.*



## ETHICS LIBRARY

### Reviews of Works in Applied Christianity

**The Arms Race Kills Even Without War** by Dorothee Soelle, trans. by Gerhard A. Elston. Fortress Press, 1983. Collection of radio broadcasts, speeches and articles originally directed to a German audience. Thesis is that even though we live under a condition we call peace, in reality we are in the midst of war—a war of the rich against the poor where casualties die of hunger and absolute poverty.

Soelle considers that to prepare for nuclear war in the name of prevention is not only a contradiction but is self-deception. She even predicts "a culture dominated by militarism—its science, its technology and its economy—will show ever increasing totalitarian tendencies." But rather than leaving the reader with a feeling of futility, Soelle raises a strong note for the hope and reality of peace. She bases it on her observations of organizations around the world which are resisting in peaceful ways the flow of militaristic and nationalistic psychology.

**God and Human Freedom** ed. by Henry J. Young. Friends United Press, 1983. Excellent introduction to life and thought of prominent black thinker Howard Thurman which explores the major theme of his thought: God and human freedom.

Critics of Thurman have wondered if he was a mystic, philosopher or theologian. Analysis of his career reveals he was all three and more. Many younger and some not-so-young black theologians of our time trace the impetus for their sense of vision and calling to this preacher and teacher. Students of black studies would benefit from this *Festschrift*. Those with a bent toward understanding liberation theology would welcome the views put forth by the interpreters of Thurman. Contributors include Martin Marty, Jurgen Moltmann, Rosemary Radford Ruether and J. Deotis Roberts.

**Peace Thinking in a Warring World** by Edward LeRoy Long, Jr. Westminster, 1983. Foundational in thought, with practical ideas on how one can work at making peace possible in human relationships on a personal as well as a global level. Long believes we have thought about war and peace in terms of handling

war as a problem rather than seeking peace as an achievement. He maintains, for instance, that peace keeping is really only a version of war thinking—a particularly precarious and potentially suicidal approach in our generation. Suggestions for moving to peace thinking include: moving from retribution to creative justice, going from repression to ordered freedom, making the transition from misunderstanding to truth and from suspicion to trust, understanding hostility and moving from it to composure and compassion, and finally stepping out of indifference to action.

—William M. Tillman, Jr.

**Unexpected News: Reading The Bible With Third World Eyes** by Robert McAfee Brown. Westminster, 1984. Examines 10 familiar biblical passages, helping the First World reader view them through Third World eyes. Results are more than "unexpected"; they are startling, challenging, disconcerting. In today's global village, it is imperative that Christians from different cultures dialogue with each other. Brown, with his considerable knowledge of Latin American liberation theology, wants to contribute to such a dialogue, with scriptures as the focal point.

While one may argue with his interpretation of Scripture (at points some undoubtedly would cry "radical," "socialist" or even "communist"), the reader is at least forced to come to grips with the meaning of the texts for today. Brown underscores how selectively we read the Bible. He also confronts our Baptist tendency to spiritualize and individualize Scripture and to attempt to separate politics and religion, worship and ethics, beliefs and behavior. His colorful style—fresh, powerful, straightforward—is reminiscent of Clarence Jordan. Another strength is his ability to address without anger those whom he is trying to convert to a new understanding of Scripture and its call to work for social, economic and political justice.

—David Wilkinson

*Tillman teaches Christian ethics at Southwestern Seminary; Wilkinson is editor of LIGHT.*

### Alcohol Abuse Rings Up Big Bill for Society

Alcohol abuse is costly. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, in its fifth special report to Congress, noted that in 1977 (the last year for which there are reliable estimates) alcohol cost the nation approximately \$50 billion in lost employment and productivity, \$17 billion in health care and \$7 billion in property loss and crime.

The report pointed out that while these costs are almost certainly much higher today, alcohol's impact transcends monetary loss. "In many fatalities," the report noted, "alcohol is an accessory before the fact."

Traffic accidents involving alcohol continue to plague American society. According to one estimate, if no drivers drank in 1977, nearly 12,000 deaths and perhaps 300,000 injuries would have been prevented.

## Case in Point

A stitch of a dream that began in the mind of a Denver, Colo., woman has woven its way into miles of flannel whose influence stretches from Moscow to Washington, D.C.

First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City recently displayed a 100-yard section of the "Peace Ribbon." Each one-yard by 18-inch wide section displays a unique message urging peace.

The ribbon includes two segments from church women in the Soviet Union and was hung in the Oklahoma Capitol after display at First Baptist.

First Baptist Acteens and several women's prayer groups are making sections which will be added to the overall length of several miles. The ribbon will be wrapped around the Pentagon on August 4, the Sunday before the 40th anniversary bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"We have to create an awareness of importance of working toward peace in whatever way we can," said First Baptist pastor Gene Garrison. "We can pray, but we can do more than pray."

The ribbon is a project of Church Women United, an interdenominational Christian women's organization. It is intended as a prayerful, loving message to the U.S. government and military leadership of their desire for peace. ■

*Adapted from The Baptist Messenger of Oklahoma.*



Drivers who drink in excess of the legal intoxication level are 3 to 15 times as likely as nondrinking drivers to be involved in a fatal crash.

The report concluded that "More carefully designed studies are required to establish unequivocally the potential adverse consequences of alcohol. Meanwhile, there is clear reason for concern about the social effects of alcohol consumption."

—NIAAA Report

## Private Lawyers Earn Big Bucks from Government

Private attorneys representing federal agencies have been paid at least \$50 million in the past two years at rates of up to \$285 an hour, according to the National Law Journal.

The federal government has 17,000 lawyers on its payroll. But documents acquired by the *Journal* under the Freedom of Information Act indicate government agencies are hiring outside counsel for everything from real estate closings to patent searches, collective bargaining and litigation.

The Reagan administration has been trying to place a \$75-an-hour cap on fees paid to lawyers who win suits against the government.

Documents reveal that one agency hired a New York lawyer at \$205 an hour to fight its landlord over the amount it paid in rent. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., which spent \$34.2 million on outside counsel in 1983 and the first nine months of 1984, paid as much as \$285 an hour to lawyers from a New York firm.

Private attorneys representing the government were paid a total of about \$25 million a year during the last two years. Hourly fees varied from agency to agency, but almost uniformly exceeded \$100 an hour.

—*The Washington Post*

## Total Spent on Arms Can Take Your Breath Away

Campaign Against Arms Trade, a British organization, reports that "the money required to provide adequate food, water, education and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money, about what the world spends on arms *every two weeks*" (italics added).

As only one small portion of this spending, the U.S. Pentagon's yearly telephone bill is—hold your breath—\$1.3 billion.

—*The Washington Spectator*

## British Baptists Respond To African Food Crisis

Thousands of British Baptists have joined worldwide efforts to ease the plight of starving Ethiopians and other Africans. They have employed a variety of creative means for raising relief funds: giving up pocket money and going without sweets, holding church bazaars and auctions, organizing youth hunger lunches, staging a flower festival, sponsoring "fun runs" and holding coffee "klatsches" in their homes while selling homemade cakes and handcrafted jewelry.

The Baptist Union office in London had collected more than 128,000 British pounds (about \$148,000) by mid-February.

Barbara Askew, who runs the Baptist World Aid office in London, reported that donations frequently came from areas in Great Britain where large numbers of people are unemployed.

—*Baptist World Alliance*

## Where There's Smoke There May Be Tragedy

Careless smoking is the No. 1 cause of fire deaths in the U.S. In 1981, for example, 2,144 people lost their lives, 3,819 more were injured, and there was an estimated \$305 million in property damage as a result of cigarette-ignited fires.

On a related note, if you are one of those persons who hates the odor of stale cigarette smoke in your hotel room, take heart. One motel in Dallas has decided to prohibit smoking in any of its suites. If guests dare to ignore the rule, they are liable to a \$100 fine, according to an agreement every guest signs when checking in. The money is used to "clean and de-toxify" the rooms.

Non-Smokers Inn was started by Lyndon W. Sanders, who got the idea during a stay in a Kansas City motel when he could not sleep because his pillow had a strong smell of smoke. He notes with satisfaction that 23 motel chains now have nonsmoking rooms.

And, in case you're wondering, motel employees don't smoke either.

—*The Washington Spectator*

## SEND THE LIGHT

\_\_\_\_\_ The following persons would be interested in receiving LIGHT.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please remove my name from your mailing list.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Street  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Street  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Voluntary subscriptions, for persons who wish to help defray costs for printing and mailing and to help underwrite a growing mailing list, are \$5.00 annually (10 issues). Checks should be made payable to LIGHT. Your cancelled check will serve as your tax deductible receipt.

Cut out and mail to Christian Life Commission, 901 Commerce, #550, Nashville, TN 37203-3620.

# Videotapes and 16mm Film Designed to Help Solve Problems People Face

Check appropriate boxes and send order form to:

**The Christian Life Commission of The Southern Baptist Convention**  
901 Commerce, #550 Nashville, Tennessee 37203-3620

Title of Videotape or 16mm Film	Size (check one)	Purchase Price	Rental Fee
Videotape: Christians Confronting the Gambling Crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Three Essentials for Marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Marriage from the Critical First Year	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Dealing With Marital Conflicts	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Love, Anger, and Intimacy	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Clergy Marriages in Crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Peace with Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Videotape: Your Family and Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Hunger Videotape: Give Us This Day	<input type="checkbox"/> 1/2" VHS	[ ] \$25	[ ] \$10
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3/4" U-Matic	[ ] \$35	[ ] \$10
	Show date: _____		
Hunger Film: Give Us This Day	<input type="checkbox"/> 16mm	[ ] \$200	[ ] \$25
	Show date: _____		

**Total Rental Fee or Purchase Price** \_\_\_\_\_

Rental fee on film and videotapes covers postage from the Christian Life Commission to the user. Film and videotape users must return film or tape the next day after showing by first class mail or U.P.S.

Ship to \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

☐ PAYMENT ENCLOSED ☐ BILL TO ABOVE ADDRESS

Name of person placing order \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_



**Christian Life  
Commission  
Of The Southern  
Baptist Convention**

901 Commerce, #550  
Nashville, TN 37203-3620

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Nashville, Tennessee  
Permit No. 518

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED