

# Light

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST CONVENTION

OCTOBER 1986

## JUST A PINCH

The Dangerous Trend Toward 'Smokeless'



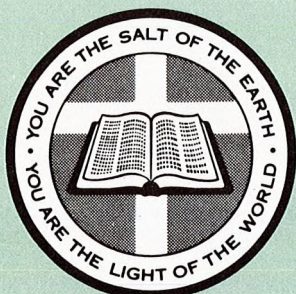


- 2 Valentine's Viewpoint
- 3 Going 'Smokeless'
- 4 Dealing with Tobacco
- 5 Activist Patsy Ayres
- 6 Biblical Relevance
- 8 Resolutions on Abortion
- 8 Book Reviews
- 11 Suicide Prevention
- 14 On the Moral Scene

**Cover photo by Jud Wood**

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Baptist Convention**

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## Pure Religion

Is any dimension of human life more vulnerable to pollution than religion? The grossest kinds of moral impurities crowd the passages of religious history. Ranging from human sacrifice through mass killings and religious prostitution to shameless exploitation, irrational superstition, conniving intrigue, and petty commercialization, these moral impurities have often been the chief characteristics of perverted religion.

**Even revealed religion** has often been compromised by bizarre immoralities. Adam and Eve blatantly disobeyed God in the Garden. Cain killed Abel. Noah got drunk. Abraham practiced polygamy. Moses was a murderer. David committed adultery and made war. The Jews who had just been delivered by the Lord God from 400 years of bondage in Egypt made their rings into a golden calf and fell down before this homemade likeness of a bellowing and slobbering bull to thank the mindless beast for their redemption. One of our Lord's 12 apostles was a traitor; and the rest forsook him and fled when the going got rough. The early church was wracked by violent quarrels, bitter disagreements, and mind-boggling heresies, later wallowing in noisome immoralities ranging from the Crusades through witch-burning to the sale of indulgences and cruel persecutions of those with whom its power-crazed princes disagreed.

Pure religion is not doctrinal correctness, moralistic attention to the letter of the law, or legalistic conformity to external pressures. Pure religion is rather a life-transforming relationship with the Lord God resulting in a life-expending relationship of self-giving service for others. In a message on authentic Christian morality prepared for a Christian Life Commission conference at Ridgecrest, the great-hearted Kyle Haselden who was then editor of *The Christian Century*, said pure religion's focus is people, its objective is to transform them into persons, its indispensable habitat is freedom, its criterion is love, and its source is God through the revelation of his Son who is Lord, Saviour, and true human. Those are insights worth remembering.

**Christians have never known** a time when they were not tempted to water down their faith and compromise with the world, chase after its temptations, accept its values, wear its clothes, talk its language, eat its delicacies, drink its libations, and sleep in its beds.

**Pure religion is something** Christians do. We are to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. We are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We are to live in the conviction that love is better than hate, peace is better than war, wisdom is better than knowledge, faith is better than doubt, stability is better than wavering, wholeness is better than fragmentation, single-mindedness is better than duplicity, endurance is better than surrender, patience is better than fury, love is better than lust, purity is better than filth, discipline is better than license, mercy is better than judgment, blessing is better than cursing, giving is better than getting, tranquility is better than strife, order is better than confusion, honesty is better than hypocrisy, righteousness is better than wickedness, the friendship of God is better than compromise with the world, humility is better than pride, Godly poverty is better than corrupt wealth, to forgive is better than to hold a grudge, purity is better than profanity, and faith *and* works are better than faith *or* works.

The case for pure religion is underlined by this word from Paul Tillich: "Without the immanence of the moral imperative, both culture and religion disintegrate because of lack of ultimate seriousness" (*Morality and Beyond*, New York: Harper and Row, 1963, p. 19). The loss of the moral imperative threatens with utter ruin both culture and religion. There is a way out. It is the way of pure religion.

*Foy Valentine*

Foy Valentine  
Executive Director



**T**he big high school halfback tucked a wad of dark brown tobacco between his lower lip and gum. Mixing with his saliva, it was quickly absorbed into his body.

If told that smoking cigarettes was risky, that it was known to cause cancer of the lungs, esophagus and mouth, the teenage athlete would probably agree. He might even explain that the dangers of smoking was one reason he had become a "dipper."

Once dandies in pantaloons delicately placed a pinch of snuff into their nostrils. Today, snuff or "dip" is not sniffed; the tobacco is deposited between the lower lip and gum. Users are called "dippers."

Chewing tobacco or "chew," sold as broad leaves or in solid plugs, is placed between the cheek and gums. The wad or quid is sucked and then expectorated—not exactly a sanitary or attractive operation. Yet both of these products known as "smokeless tobacco" have become increasingly popular with young adults, teenagers and even children. According to recent hearings in one state, children as young as two are using smokeless tobacco. Habitual users are not confined to rural areas; they are found nationwide and include both sexes.

**U.S. consumption of smokeless tobacco** had reached an estimated 134 million pounds in 1982 (up from 117 million in 1978). Since no federal tax was imposed until this summer, exact figures are impossible to determine.

Most users know cigarette smoking is a health risk, but many are unaware that snuff and chew may also cause oral cancer and oral health problems such as periodontal

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*According to recent hearings in one state, children as young as two are using smokeless tobacco.*

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damage, blackened teeth and tooth abrasion. Sugars contained in the products are an additional worry.

**A campaign has been** waged in recent years by the American Dental Association, the American Cancer Society and other consumer health groups who believe use of smokeless tobacco products should be an adult choice, but that the public should at least be informed through warning labels of the risks involved. Spokesmen for these groups are also disturbed because they feel the tobacco industry has aimed some of

its ads at teenagers and even children.

One of the most outspoken critics has been Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television. At a series of hearings in Massachusetts on the health hazards involved, Charren said sophisticated techniques are being used to manipulate the attitudes and values of children. Her group asked the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission to ban smokeless tobacco ads from TV and radio—a ban that took effect Aug. 21.

In addition, the American Medical Association has called for a ban on smokeless tobacco sales to persons under age 21.

**The tobacco industry** has consistently claimed that no health hazards have been proved to result from use of snuff or chewing tobacco. Industry leaders argued that ads are aimed at adults. Primary users, they claimed, are workers age 18 to 49 who cannot smoke on the job, such as steel and auto workers. Critics countered that ad personalities such as former pro football player Walt Garrison and the Charlie Daniels band appeal particularly to youngsters.

The American Dental Association pointed out that manufacturers have held tobacco spitting contests in which 13-year-olds have participated and been rewarded with T-shirts featuring the products' names. To encourage young people to try their products, many tobacco companies also send representatives to college campuses with free samples. A

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*Manufacturers have held tobacco spitting contests in which 13-year-olds have been rewarded with T-shirts.*

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## Despite the Risks, Youth Are Taking Up The 'Smokeless' Alternative to Cigarettes

# DIPPING DANGER

—By Jane Scherer



survey by Ralph Nader's Health Research Group found that nearly all professional ball teams get samples from the manufacturers and that use of the products among players ranges from 8 percent to 75 percent.

**Today, many dentists** are warning their patients against smokeless tobacco. Adding impetus to their warnings was the 1984 death of a 19-year-old Oklahoma track star who



had used snuff since the age of 12. His mother brought suit against U.S. Tobacco for damages.

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*Some health officials believe snuff and chewing tobacco may be more addictive than cigarettes.*

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Congress this year passed a bill that requires warning labels on smokeless tobacco packages similar to those on cigarettes. After February

27, 1987, labels on products and the remaining smokeless tobacco ads in other media must display on a revolving basis one of three health warnings mandated by the federal government.

Some states have acted on their own. Since February 1986, Massachusetts has required all snuff products to carry warning labels. Oklahoma and Idaho have organized a public information campaign. In Texas, a branch of the American Cancer Society has produced a slide and tape presentation that shows gingival recession, teeth worn down by the grit and sand in the tobacco, and

leukoplakia, an early cancerous lesion.

**Some health officials** believe snuff and chewing tobacco may be more addictive than cigarettes since nicotine (addictive whether chewed or inhaled) enters the bloodstream faster when it is absorbed through the gums than when it is smoked. Their testimony has been supported by a number of ex-users who indicated that giving up chewing tobacco was much harder than giving up cigarettes. ■

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*Scherer, a freelance writer from Massapequa Park, N.Y., has written for several Southern Baptist publications.*

## THE TOBACCO MENACE

### Taking Action Against America's Deadliest Drug

As the No. 1 cause of premature death, tobacco is the deadliest drug in American society. Christians have a responsibility to do everything in their power to end the tobacco menace.

**1. Abstinence.** Christian teaching has long maintained that Christians should refrain from any practice which does demonstrable harm to the body. Baptists traditionally interpret 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 to mean that we are under biblical injunction to keep our bodies healthy and strong. The clear evidence regarding the dangers of smoking and use of smokeless tobacco requires every thoughtful Christian to abstain from the practice.

**2. Education.** The more people know about the multiplied dangers of tobacco use, the less likely they are to imbibe. The percentage of Americans who smoke has declined significantly in the past 20 years because of increased efforts in education. At the same time, with selected populations there are still disturbing trends. More young women in the 20 to 34 age bracket smoked in 1983 than in 1980.

Churches can participate in special education efforts by supporting such public projects as the American Cancer Society's annual "Smokeout" which encourages smokers to quit for a day as a way of realizing they can quit for good. Providing factual information and biblical principles can help put the issue in perspective for church members.

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*The more people know about the multiplied dangers of tobacco use, the less likely they are to imbibe.*

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Churches and individual Christians should support efforts by the public schools, the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association and other responsible groups to increase awareness of the dangers of the use of tobacco in any form.

**3. Legislation.** Christians should generally support all measures which tend to make smoking more expensive and/or difficult and to restrict the arenas in which smoking is considered acceptable. Surgeon

General C. Everett Koop has set the goal of a smokeless society by the year 2000. Banning smoking in restaurants, offices and public areas will help toward that goal. All tobacco advertising should be prohibited.

In addition, Christians should press for higher taxes on tobacco products and for government incentives to help tobacco farmers switch to other crops. Christian farmers, especially, should be encouraged to switch rather than continuing to grow such a dangerous product. The concern of tobacco farmers for their livelihood is legitimate and must be considered if efforts to eliminate smoking are to be successful.

**4. Action.** Churches can cooperate with local health agencies in sponsoring local health fairs or smokeouts. For example, all the churches in a city could enlist their members, local news media and health officials to organize a smokeless community picnic. Recreation could be planned, awards given and advice provided concerning basic health issues. ■

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*Adapted from a new Christian Life Commission pamphlet, "Issues & Answers: Smoking."*



# AYRES: FUSING WORDS & DEEDS

## Patsy Ayres Believes Social Involvement Must Be Built On a Spiritual Foundation

By David Wilkinson

Consider the many faces of Patsy Ayres: Southern Baptist layperson, Bread for the World president, mother of two, Christian Life Commission member, college president's wife, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America steering committee member, SEEDS board member.

The list could go on, reflecting a dizzying variety of interests and responsibilities.

But Patsy Ayres is more than busy; she is committed. As an activist who backs her words with actions, she has led a quiet but effective crusade for Christian social action on behalf of the poor and the hungry.

Ayres' interest in social issues is life-long. But the focus for her involvement emerged out of a deep spiritual crisis more than 15 years ago.

Acting on an interest in social concerns which had been heightened while pursuing a degree in economics at Wellesley College outside Boston, Ayres agreed to serve on several community committees set up to urge desegregation.

**Her idealism, however,** soon turned sour, leading to "an increasing sense of anger and frustration at society, the church and ultimately God."

The frustration eventually resulted in "an intense spiritual crisis."

"I realized I had been relying on my own strength rather than God's power" in confronting social issues, Ayres explains.

**As she reexamined** the Bible and found "many of these same concerns deeply imbedded in Scripture," she discovered "a new sense of hope."

That hope was reinforced by effective models of Christian social action such as Foy Valentine at the SBC Christian Life Commission, James Dunn and Phil Strickland at the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commis-



Patsy Ayres

sion and by the community involvement of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, where Jimmy Allen was then pastor.

**Ayres reentered** the social arena armed with a new sense of commitment. She served as a volunteer in First Baptist's Community Ministries Center. She helped start a UNICEF chapter in San Antonio. She was appointed to the Mayor's Committee on the Status of Women. She served for six years on the Texas Christian Life Commission, including a term as chairperson.

She also chaired the Texas Youth Council, appointed by the governor to help improve the state's juvenile correction system.

**When her husband,** Robert, an investment banker, was elected vice-chancellor and president of the University of the South in 1977, the family relocated to Sewanee, Tenn. Ayres' social involvement simply assumed a few more responsibilities.

She was elected to the SBC Christian Life Commission and to the board of Bread for the World, a Washington-based Christian citizens' lobby which focuses on hunger and public policy. In 1985 she was elected BFW president, succeeding Dunn.

Her experience at the Christian Life

Commission has been "invaluable," says Ayres. "You see the implications of the gospel for so many areas of our lives."

While Ayres and her husband have been involved in many social issues, world hunger has always been a pivotal concern.

"Hunger is a focal issue connected to so many other concerns such as poverty and peace," she says.

For Ayres, ministry to the hungry is "a profound expression of evangelism. It's a witness to the world. I think it is imperative if we are going to present the whole gospel. That kind of genuine concern draws people to Christ."

**Her volunteer work** at First Baptist, San Antonio, with the hungry and homeless was "such a rich experience," she says. "We have so much to learn from the hungry."

As a layperson who speaks often in churches and on college campuses, Ayres believes grassroots support for hunger-related issues is growing.

Among Southern Baptists, she has seen "a tremendous growth in awareness, reflected both in increased giving to hunger relief, growth in mission programs to the poor and hungry and also growth in local

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*"I realized I had been relying on my own strength rather than God's power" in confronting social issues.*

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church programs—from food pantries to meals-on-wheels."

One shortcoming that concerns her, however, is that Baptists have "been less alert to the implications of public policy for the very folks we're trying to serve. We must affect public policy if we hope to effect lasting change."

**"Too often we have** held out a bowl of soup with one hand while with the other hand we have supported systems that oppress the poor and the hungry." ■

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*Wilkinson is director of news and information services for the Christian Life Commission and editor of LIGHT.*

# IS THE SCRIPTURE REALLY RELEVANT?

## The Question of 'So What' Helps Focus Biblical Principles on Today's Concerns

By Warren McWilliams

"So what?"

While those words could reflect anger in an argument, I often hear them in a college classroom or a Bible study. The class will be discussing the meaning of some biblical passage when someone interrupts with "so what?" Usually the person is asking about the contemporary relevance of a passage.

It's an appropriate question to raise. When studying a Bible passage we should consider what it *meant* to the original author and audience. This approach leads us into the historical background of the text. We should also consider what the passage *means* to us today. This

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*Although we may find it easy to affirm the authority of the Bible, we frequently find it harder to demonstrate its relevance.*

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emphasis focuses primarily on contemporary relevance.

Although we may find it easy to affirm the authority of the Bible, we frequently find it harder to demonstrate its relevance. When we turn to the Bible for insights on issues such as genetic engineering, nuclear war or consumer fraud, we may become confused and frustrated. Even Christian leaders often disagree on the relevance of the Bible for these and other issues.

Some biblical texts give explicit, specific advice about ethical issues. For example: Anyone who strikes his

mother or father is to be executed (*Ex. 21:15*). You should not eat blood (*Lev. 17:14*). Women should wear a head-covering in public worship (*1 Cor. 11:5*). Adultery and stealing are wrong (*Ex. 20:14-15*). Much of the ethical advice of the Bible is clear and pointed. Both the Old and New Testaments include lengthy ethical sections which give advice on a multitude of issues.

The value of these passages is enormous for those who accept the authority of the Bible and can find passages on the issues that concern them. When we have analyzed the contemporary situation or issue (what is), we turn to the Bible for advice about what to do (what ought to be).

Taken as isolated references, however, these explicit passages are not always that helpful. For example, sometimes we are struggling with an issue that is not discussed specifically in the Bible. A pre-med or nursing student interested in bioethics will find few if any passages dealing directly with their concerns. While a sociology major interested in racial prejudice will find several biblical dis-

cussions, a physical education major interested in the ethics of competitive athletics will not find that particular subject listed in the concordance.

Some biblical texts are specific, yet we still wonder about their relevance. I recall a controversy raging on the pages of a state Baptist newspaper about Deuteronomy 22:5, a text M\*A\*S\*H fans might call the "Klinger" passage. Does this verse tell us what clothes are appropriate today? Can women wear slacks and men wear kilts?

Frequently such controversies occur because we are guilty of proof-texting. A helpful rule is "a text without a context is a proof-text." The relevance of some passages would be understood better if we would interpret them in light of the historical context, the context of the author's overall argument and the context of the overarching themes of the entire Bible.

For example, Paul's advice to the Corinthian women to wear veils in

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*When we have analyzed the contemporary situation (what is), we turn to the Bible for advice about what to do (what ought to be).*

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church reflects the social customs of his day. Today, we are not shocked by women without hats and do not assume they have immoral occupations.

Despite the danger of proof-texting, these passages with explicit ethical advice can be very helpful. Even if the specific issues addressed are no longer our concerns, we often can derive some general, transcultural principle from the biblical text. For example, whether or not we should eat food offered to idols is not a "hot" issue for Christians today. Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 8:10 about the voluntary limitation of personal rights or freedoms, however, is exceedingly relevant. We might decide not to participate in some activity, not because it was inherently wrong, but because it would become a "stumbling block" to someone else (*1 Cor. 8:8, 13*). Some of the advice

### CLC Seminar: Don't Miss It

Mark your calendars.

The 1987 National Seminar sponsored by the Christian Life Commission will feature addresses on "Critical Issues Facing Today's Families."

The annual seminar will be held March 23-25 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte, N.C.

Program details will be reported in upcoming issues of *LIGHT*.



## Suggested Resources

Birch, Bruce C. and Rasmussen, Larry L. **Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life.** Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976.

Daly, Robert J. **Christian Biblical Ethics.** New York: Paulist, 1984.

Everding, H. Edward, Jr., and Wilbanks, Danna W. **Decision-making and the Bible.** Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1975.

Longenecker, Richard N. **New Testament Social Ethics for Today.** Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1984.

Ogletree, Thomas W. **The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics.** Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

Verhey, Allen. **The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament.** Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984.

in the Bible may be culturally conditioned but we can find a principle that transcends the cultural context and is eternally relevant.

A second major category of biblical texts are those passages which give ethical advice in the form of general principles. Paul tells us to "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22) and to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Although such texts do not refer specifically to contemporary ethical issues, they do have a clear relevance for them.

The greatest value of such general

*Too often our discussions of the Bible dwell on exotic or unusual ethical situations rather than those basic principles which offer daily guidance.*

principles is their comprehensiveness. Even when specific advice is absent, these general principles can guide us in making biblically based decisions. For example, the Bible does not deal explicitly with drugs such as marijuana or cocaine. Christians know, however, that they should treat their bodies with respect. Paul's advice to the Corinthian Christians

about treating their bodies as "a temple from the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) originally related to sexual conduct, but the general principle is certainly relevant for discussions of alcohol and other drugs.

Many of these general passages deal with our basic personal values or character. Although the details of the situations and dilemmas we face may change, our basic character can be built on passages that stress values such as truth, justice and love. Too often our discussions of the Bible dwell on exotic or unusual ethical situations rather than those basic values and principles which offer daily guidance.

Even these general principles, however, can sometimes become the focus of debate. We all want to be "holy," for example, but we may disagree on how to achieve it. Some insist holiness involves withdrawal from the contamination of the world, while others cite the example of Jesus in associating with sinners. These different interpretations of the ideal of holiness point to the fact that principles require interpretation and application to specific cases. Christians often agree on the principle but disagree on the application.

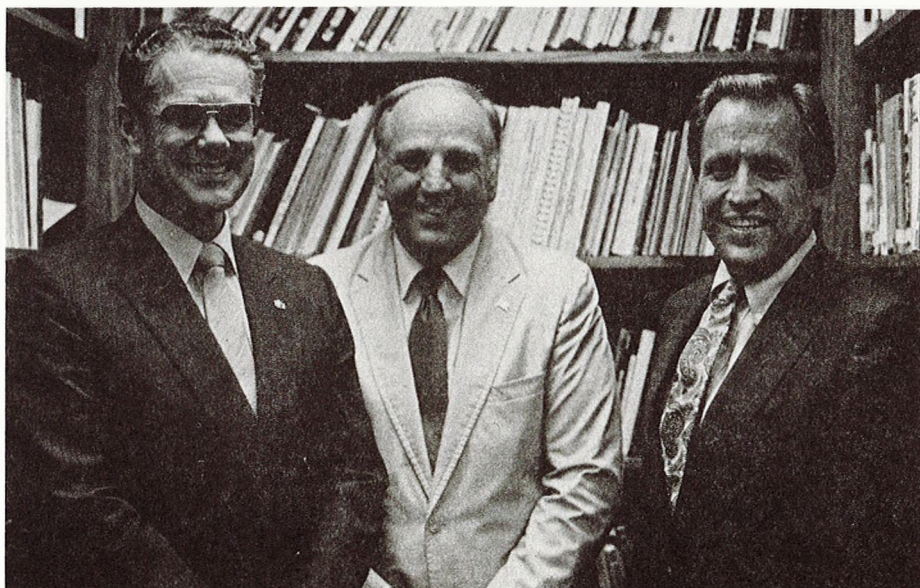
A very helpful Bible study would be to investigate a contemporary

issue that has both specific passages and general principles which relate to it. From such a study we can learn how the Bible states a principle and applies it. Such a case study would help us learn how to apply the Bible's principles to our age.

For example, the New Testament in several places discusses the status of women in the church and at home. Paul's comment that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28) is a relevant general principle. In other texts we can see how he applies this principle to the situation of the first century. Much of the controversy today about the role of women stems from the fact that some stress the *principle* of Galatians 3:28 while others stress Paul's *application* passages.

"So what!" is a valid concern in biblical studies. It is a question that deserves to be asked. Yet even here there is a danger as well. Our convenience-oriented, instant-everything culture often demands quick, simple answers to complex issues. Christians who are willing to spend the appropriate time and energy in Bible study can discover the real and lasting relevance of the Bible for today's moral issues. ■

*McWilliams is associate professor of Bible at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Okla.*



**NEW OFFICERS**—Christian Life Commission 1986-87 officers are, from left, secretary Roy T. Rhodes, attorney from Tallahassee, Fla.; vice-chairman Coy C. Privette, executive director, Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc., Raleigh; and chairman Lynn P. Clayton, editor of the Baptist Message weekly newspaper of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Alexandria.



# ABORTION: SOME COMMON GROUND

## A Review of SBC Resolutions Since 1971 Indicates Some Broad Areas of Agreement

By Robert Parham

Where do Southern Baptists stand on abortion?

Nine Southern Baptist Convention resolutions adopted over a 14-year period give a strong clue, but only a clue. By their very nature, resolutions reflect only the opinion of the majority of messengers voting in a given session at a particular convention. Resolutions are not binding on churches

or church members. No Baptist speaks for another. One convention does not speak for the next. Despite these limitations, resolutions are important road markers.

The first SBC resolution on abortion was adopted in 1971 at the meeting in St. Louis. That resolution emphasized the "sanctity of human life, including fetal life," and the need for society "to protect those who

cannot protect themselves." It encouraged "Southern Baptists to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental and physical health of the mother."

In 1974, the convention reaffirmed the resolution adopted in St. Louis. This resolution again emphasized the sanctity of human life. It also called for a position between the extremes of those who favored abortion on demand and those who viewed all abortion as murder.

When the SBC met in Norfolk in 1976, a new resolution was adopted. It acknowledged that "the practice of abortion for selfish non-therapeutic

## ETHICS LIBRARY

### Reviews of Works in Applied Christianity

**Cry Justice** by John deGruchy. *Orbis*, 1986. Valuable worship resource that packs a powerful ethical wallop by relating personal faith and witness to social themes such as freedom, human dignity and justice.

The prayers, poems, hymns and experiences are fresh and compelling. They come from the hearts and lives of black and white Christians in South Africa. The African experience can enrich ours. "Africans, consistent with the biblical tradition, do not accept improper dichotomies. For them life is of a piece and the spiritual and the material inform each other quite intimately" (Bishop Desmond Tutu, from the Foreword).

This is more than a book about a land aflame with human pain and delayed dreams. It is a book about people, human rights, God's Word and Christian responsibility. It offers some profound and disturbing theological insights rarely found in a brief devotional book.

—W. David Lockard

**Enemies and How to Love Them** by Gerald A. Vanderhaar. *Twenty-third Publications*, 1985. Analyzes, clarifies and applies Jesus' command to "love your enemies." The author, who

directs the Peace Studies Program at Christian Brothers College in Memphis, also has written *Christians and Nonviolence in the Nuclear Age* (1982).

After examining the psychology of enemy-making, Vanderhaar explores two myths with corresponding mentalities. The war myth and the peace myth provide different perspectives from which historical reality can be viewed. He then analyzes Jesus' interaction with his enemies before attempting to "make sense of enemy love" as a personal strategy. In a concluding chapter, he applies the strategy of enemy-love to American-Soviet relations in a nuclear age.

—W. Clyde Tilley

**Megatraumas: America at the Year 2000** by Gov. Richard D. Lamm. *Houghton Mifflin*, 1985. Lamm, apparently paradoxically, says the book is optimistic: "I believe that anything predictable in human affairs is preventable. I offer this book not as a prediction of what inevitably must be but as a warning of what might be." From that premise, the Colorado governor uses what some would call a science fiction scenario. Yet his year 2000 setting merely assumes 1984

statistics extrapolated to that time. Crises treated are projections of what he thinks will happen where indifference, mistakes in judgment, cover-ups or policy error are in place now.

Lamm envisions these crises through the eyes of a U.S. President preparing her State of the Union Address by means of cabinet officers' and agency heads' reports. The accounts are fascinating and fearful, dealing with health care, immigration, crime and terrorism, education and international traumas. Intentionally picking up on the Megatrends fad, Lamm constrains the reader to consider the pessimistic side of current national and international lifestyle. The book demonstrates astute political insight and prophetic courage.

—William M. Tillman, Jr.

**No More Shacks** by Millard Fuller with Diane Scott. *Word*, 1986. Most recent of a trilogy of books by these authors about the exciting and unfolding story of Habitat for Humanity. Habitat works with the poor in building modest houses that are then sold to the poor on a no-profit, no-interest basis.

Although covering the movement from the beginning, the authors are so selective, thematic and creative in telling this story that even those who have read the first two books (*Bokotola* and *Love in the Mortar Joints*) will be equally enthralled by



reasons wantonly destroys fetal life, dulls our society's moral sensitivity, and leads to a cheapening of all human life." Once again, a convention resolution reaffirmed "the biblical sacredness and dignity of all human life, including fetal life." It also called on Southern Baptists to work to change national attitudes and conditions which encourage people to use abortion as a form of birth control.

In 1977, messengers endorsed the 1976 resolution with the following statement in a preamble: "... we confirm our strong opposition to abortion on demand and all governmental policies and actions which permit this." The basic content of the 1976 resolution was reaffirmed at the conventions in Atlanta, in 1978, and in Houston, in 1979.

Returning in 1980 to St. Louis, the

site of the first resolution on abortion, convention messengers passed a new resolution which underscored the "sacredness and dignity of all human life, born and unborn," expressed opposition to abortion on demand, and added a couple of new wrinkles. First was a statement expressing abhorrence of the "use of tax money or public, tax-supported medical facilities for selfish, non-therapeutic abortion." Second was the support of "a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion except to save the life of the mother."

At the 1982 SBC in New Orleans, the substance of the 1980 resolution was expanded: "... all human life, both born and pre-born, is sacred, bearing the image of God, and is not subject to personal judgments as to 'quality of life' based on such subjec-

tive criteria as stage of development, abnormality, intelligence level, degree of dependency, cost of medical treatment, or inconvenience to parents."

The resolution broadened opposition to the use of tax money for "selfish unnecessary abortions" to the use of tax money for the withholding of "treatment from unwanted or defective newly born infants." Furthermore, the resolution opposed the use of Baptist-supported medical facilities for abortions and expressed concern about "infanticide, child abuse, and active euthanasia."

Meeting in Kansas City in 1984, the SBC once again expressed concern for the sanctity of human life. This resolution went beyond deploring abortion to encouraging Southern Baptist members, institutions, and churches "to work diligently to provide counseling, housing, and adoption placement services for unwed mothers."

Alternatives to abortion were emphasized. This resolution opposed dissemination of "contraceptive medications" to minors, called on Southern Baptists to ask their physicians whether or not they either performed or gave referrals for abortion, and asked for commendation of physicians who abstained from performing abortions or making

this latest work which updates the story. It spells out Habitat's progression toward the ambitious goal of "removing poverty housing from the face of the earth." The work of God's Spirit in a setting reminiscent of the koinonia of primitive Christianity is narrated so as to make achievement of that goal credible. This is especially true with the final chapter's message that Habitat sees itself not as the monopolizer of the task but as the conscience of the world in the issue of decent housing for all persons.

—W. Clyde Tilley

**Pro-Earth** by Nadine Hundertmark, ed. Friendship Press, 1985. Voices for planetary care will not be continually silent. Note the stream of newspaper articles and TV news blurbs about pesticides, nuclear waste dumps, acid rain and water pollution. This book resonates with the "pro-earth" sounds reverberating all around.

This compilation of essays certainly is not intended to be exhaustive in treating all ecological problems. Yet, through poignant use of black and white photography, it moves the reader to deeper commitment to planetary stewardship from a Christian perspective. A final section moves toward implementation of ecological principles through simulated games and other exercises. Ideas appropriate for adults and young people are included.

Look at this for a reflective perspective on what technology is

doing to us. But also read this for the good news that possibilities are available for changing the course of the anti-earth campaign we appear to be set upon.

—William M. Tillman, Jr.

**Women, Freedom, and Calvin** by Jane Dempsey Douglass. Westminster, 1985. Work of historical theology which analyzes Calvin's perspective on the role of women in church and society. Much more open on this issue than his contemporary reformers, Calvin's view of freedom in Christ allows the governing of the church to be accommodated to changing cultural needs. Thus, doctrinally women are not forbidden to serve as church leaders; clearly, he asserts, there were female antecedents in the early church.

Douglass has skillfully used Calvin's writings as a case study instructive for the contemporary church as it struggles to discern appropriate church polity. Advocates of women in ministry have a time-honored friend in Calvin.

—Molly Marshall-Green

**REVIEWERS**—Lockard is director of organization for the Christian Life Commission; Marshall-Green teaches Christian theology at Southern Seminary, Louisville; Tilley teaches religion and philosophy at Union University, Jackson, Tenn.; and Tillman teaches Christian ethics at Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth.

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*Southern Baptists believe human life is sacred, for human beings are created in the image of God.*

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referrals. Convention agencies were urged to provide literature against abortion.

**What may we conclude** from this survey?

First, Southern Baptists are generally opposed to abortion on demand or to abortion as a method of birth control. Southern Baptists believe human life is sacred, for human beings are created in the image of God.

Second, Southern Baptist resolutions have narrowed the exceptions



for abortion from four in 1971 to one in 1980 (danger to the life of the mother). They have also broadened their focus from strict concern about abortion on demand in 1980 to concern about child abuse, infanticide, care for unwed mothers, and alternatives to abortion in 1982 and 1984.

**Third, resolutions on abortion** have tended to assume that government is the key to social change. The 1971 resolution urged Southern Baptists to work for legislation which would allow abortions under certain tragic circumstances. The 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1979 resolutions acknowledged the limited role of government in dealing with matters relating to abortion. The 1980, 1982, and 1984 resolutions supported an amendment to the United States Constitution prohibiting abortion. At each juncture, the role of government was emphasized more than evangelism, education about sexuality, mission action, values clarification, and strengthening families.

Analysis of the nine SBC resolutions suggests Southern Baptists

*Careful analysis indicates that Southern Baptists have never been far apart on the issue of abortion.*

have broad areas of agreement: human life is sacred, abortion on demand is wrong, abortion is an unacceptable form of birth control, and Christian citizens have a moral responsibility to participate in the political process. Careful analysis indicates that even with some gradual change in perspective, Southern Baptists have never been far apart on the issue of abortion.

**With such agreement,** the constructive question in a time of fragmentation is not, "where do Southern Baptists stand on the issue of abortion," but "what common ground do Southern Baptists share from which to work constructively for the common good?" ■

*Parham is director of human concerns for the Christian Life Commission.*

## ROCK PORN

### One Year Later, Tipper Gore Wonders If Self-Policing Policy is Sufficient

It's been a year since the music recording industry reluctantly agreed to put warning labels on covers of new albums that contain explicit rock lyrics involving sex or violence.

But Tipper Gore, co-founder of the Parents Music Resource Center which lobbied for the self-policing policy, says the response from record companies has been "spotty" at best.

Gore, wife of Sen. Albert Gore, Jr. of Tennessee, illustrated the proliferation of graphic sexual and violent themes in rock music in an address at the Christian Life Commission's 1986 national seminar. (See excerpt in June issue of LIGHT.)

The Southern Baptist layperson is disappointed that only "a handful" of

new releases this year contain the promised "Parental Advisory" label or printed lyrics on the album cover.

She says the PMRC may try to negotiate a tougher agreement with record companies if the self-policing strategy fails.

"Some companies have been complying in good faith and others have not," she says. "They agreed to police themselves. If they truly do this in good faith, then we would have across-the-board consumer information on all materials that warrant it. We are giving them that chance. We are just waiting to see." ■

*Adapted from a Gannett News Service story in Sept. 7, 1986 issue of The Tennessean.*



**SEMINAR ADDRESS**—Tipper Gore illustrated the shocking trend toward increasingly graphic themes of sex and violence in contemporary rock music.



# STEPS TO HELP PREVENT SUICIDE

## It's a Subject Many Would Rather Avoid, But Individuals and Churches Must Help

By Bill Blackburn

*Suicide.* The word itself strikes fear in our hearts. Suicide rates have risen dramatically in this country in recent years. Indeed, few persons reading this article will have escaped being personally touched by the suicide of someone they have known.

How should a Christian understand suicide? What can Christians do to prevent suicide?

### *First, we can turn to the Bible.*

The Bible mentions seven suicides, but they are recounted with little comment. The most prominent account is that of Judas who hung himself after betraying Jesus. In the Old Testament, the prime example of suicide is that of King Saul who killed himself by falling on his own sword.

The fact that the Bible has little comment on or condemnation of these cases of suicide does not imply a simple acceptance of this form of death. Instead, the case against suicide is made from scripture by the teaching that life is a gift from God (*Gen. 1:27*) and that it is therefore not to be taken by one's own hand (*Ex. 20:13*).

The issue of suicide had to be faced early in the history of the church because some Christians wanted martyrdom so much that they were aggressively seeking their own deaths. Augustine roundly condemned such practice. His condemnation was based on the biblical teaching that life is a gift from God

and that it is not up to any individual to choose the time or the method of his or her own death. Similar pronouncements can be found throughout the history of the church with varying degrees of moral censure placed on the person who commits suicide.

### *Second, we can understand the motivations for suicide.*

People choose to kill themselves for a variety of reasons:

1. *To escape from an intolerable situation.* This is the most universal motivation. It is important to understand that what may be seen as intolerable to one person may not be to another. In seeking to prevent suicide, the important question is not

only what is the person facing but also how is he or she coping with it?

2. *To punish the survivors.* Suicide can be a hostile act. Often the hostility is aimed at the survivors who will be hurt by the suicide. On the other hand, many persons who take their lives do not have this motivation. In fact, many of them are oblivious to the terrible grief their deaths bring.

3. *To gain attention.* Suicide is sometimes seen as a way to gain the attention a person would otherwise never get in life. Gaining attention also is a common motivation for an attempted suicide. Nevertheless, a suicide gesture should never be dismissed only as a plea for attention.

4. *To manipulate others.* Again, this can be a motivation for an attempted suicide or a component of an actual suicide. The person tries to

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*Few persons reading this article will escape being personally touched by the suicide of someone they have known.*

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achieve through death what he or she could not achieve in life.

5. *To join a deceased loved one.* This motivation is dependent on the belief that one will be reunited beyond death with loved ones. For

## CASE IN POINT

### More Elderly Persons Opting for Suicide

Suicides among the nation's oldest citizens appear to be rising again after decades of decline.

Government figures for 1983, the latest available, show there were 19.2 suicides per 100,000 persons 65 and older.

The rate was 11.2 for young people age 15-24. Suicide rates in that age group have been declining in recent years.

Psychologist John McIntosh of Indiana University suspects suicides among the elderly "are going to become an upward trend."

McIntosh and other psychologists say a major contributor is financial pressure—trying to meet rising costs on fixed incomes while facing cutbacks in government benefits and private pensions.

Also, increased life expectancy—71.1 years for men and 78.3 for women—may be a factor as longevity is often accompanied by disability.

Most experts believe the rates are underestimated since many suicides are disguised by the victims themselves or by physicians and survivors.

*Adapted from USA TODAY.*



some, this promise becomes a reason to die.

6. *To avoid punishment.* Frequently suicides in jails or those following the breaking news of a scandal are motivated by a desire to escape from punishment or embarrassment.

7. *To be punished.* Some persons convince themselves their behavior has been so reprehensible they deserve to die, even if it must be by their own hands. This is sometimes the case with a person who thinks he or she has committed the "unpardonable sin" and will burn in hell no matter what is done.

8. *To avoid becoming a burden to family or friends.* This motivation is present in many cases where there is some chronic disease or a problem such as alcoholism.

9. *To avoid the personal pain and suffering of a dread disease.* Rather than face the ravages of cancer or the debilitating effects of something like Parkinson's disease, some choose suicide.

10. *To pursue an irrational, impulsive whim.* This motive occurs only occasionally. Almost all persons who take their lives go through a long process before reaching the point of suicide. But some persons, especially some adolescents, commit suicide on an impulsive whim.

11. *To seek martyrdom.* This motive is involved in only a small

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*Almost all persons who take their lives go through a long process before reaching the point of suicide.*

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percentage of suicides. Even among the martyrs who have died nobly for a cause, there was sometimes a morbid attraction to death. Some persons take their lives thinking they are advancing their cause. This motive is evident in events that led up to their deaths and in suicide notes which included instructions to their followers and their enemies.

12. *To express love.* During or

following a breakup of a romance or marriage, suicide is seen as a way to say, "See, this is how much I loved you."

Most suicides, of course, involve a mixture of several motives. Also, while most persons consider these motives as inadequate for taking one's life, to the suicidal person who has lost perspective, these reasons seem compelling and even reasonable. Suicidal persons need to regain a right perspective on life before they can see that suicidal thinking is irrational.

*Third, we can take steps toward prevention.*

In many cases informed, caring people can help prevent suicide. This does not mean we should become Lone Ranger Suicide Preventers; nor should most of us try to do the work of persons trained in counseling and suicide prevention. Instead, equipped with some basic information, pastors,

## HUNGER ACTION

### Youth Give Leadership

If Southern Baptist support of world hunger relief begins to wane, don't blame the youth.

Young people continue to lead the way in hunger education and action.

In August, for example, the National Royal Ambassador Congress in Memphis recognized hunger as a missions challenge. While enjoying the fun and competition of athletic contests, the Pioneer boys (7th-12th graders) also raised \$6,000 for Southern Baptist world hunger relief.

A two-mile run and a canoe race, cosponsored by Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis and the Brotherhood Commission, emphasized the "Dare to Care" theme of the four-day event.

Meanwhile, in Virginia, young people at First Baptist Church, Richmond, decided "Youth Week '86" should include a focus on world hunger. Using a "rice bowl" emphasis, the teenagers led the church to raise more than \$14,000. The money has been designated for emergency food and crop seeds in Brazil and for milk distribution to malnourished children in Paraguay. ■

family members, friends, co-workers and others can watch for clues, be willing to help and be ready to get the person professional help.

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*One clue does not of itself indicate the possibility of suicide, so you should be on the alert for a cluster of clues.*

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The following guidelines are important in helping to prevent suicide.

1. *Be alert to clues of suicidal thought and behavior.* There are four major clues:

- **Stress factors.** All of us live under a certain amount of stress. How that stress is handled is extremely important. When you see a person under significant stress, particularly for a long period of time, ask yourself, "How is he handling this stress? Is her coping ability working or is she beginning to crumble under the weight? Is he expressing hopelessness?"

One clue does not of itself indicate the possibility of suicide, so you should be on the alert for a cluster of clues. Stress alone does not necessarily foretell suicide, but when combined with other clues, it can become a significant part of a cluster of clues that raises the possibility of suicide.

- **Personal history.** Has there been a previous suicide attempt? Was there a significant death early in this person's life? Has he or she had a history of depression? Does the person have a history of being abused as a child? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then the possibility of suicide is increased.

- **Behavioral clues.** Listen to the language of behavior. Is this person doing things to prepare for death such as checking insurance, making funeral arrangements or giving away valued possessions? Has he or she recently acquired a means of death such as a gun or poison? Are there evidences of withdrawal or isolation? Has a suicide note been written? Are there sudden changes in behavior?

- **Verbal clues.** These may include



such comments as: "I'm not the man I used to be." "You'd all be better off without me." "I've blown it, and it's hopeless." "Do you think suicide is the unpardonable sin?" "How does a person donate his organs to medical science?" "I want you to know how much you've meant to me." "I want to tell you goodbye." "I've figured a way out of all my troubles." "I can't take it anymore." "They'll be sorry for the way they've treated me."

If the verbal clues fit a cluster of clues, then you should take the next step in suicide prevention.

**2. Assess the risk.** If you suspect a person is seriously contemplating suicide and you are close enough to the person to talk with him or her about it, then raise the question. Ask something like this: "I have noticed that you seem to be really disturbed and down lately, and I was wondering if you are thinking about harming yourself?"

Some people avoid this question for fear of giving the person the idea. If you have seen a cluster of significant clues, then the probability is that the person has already thought about suicide, and you will not be planting the idea. In fact, this individual may have been sending clues in the hope that someone would talk

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*Listen to the language of behavior. Is this person doing things to prepare for death?*

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with him or her about this life-or-death issue.

If the person has been considering suicide, then ask if he or she has gone so far as to plan how the suicide will be carried out. If the person has a plan and has a lethal means available to carry out the plan, then the risk of suicide is high. If the person is showing significant emotional disturbance or irrational thinking or is abusing alcohol or other drugs, then the risk is even greater.

**3. Provide immediate help.** If you are dealing with a high-risk person,

there are some immediate things you can do while you seek to get the person professional help. Pray for God's guidance and help. Listen carefully. Remain positive without being glib as you seek to help the person sort out all he or she is

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*Remain positive without being glib as you seek to help the person sort out all he or she is facing.*

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facing. Seek to discover other persons who are significant to this person and who can provide additional help and friendship. Try to get the person to relinquish the gun, pills or other means of suicide. Do not forcibly take the means from them since they can replace those means or devise new ones.

Spread the responsibility. If you are the only person who knows about the suicide intentions, then get the person to agree with you about other friends or family members who should be told. Ask the person to make a contract with you that he or she will not commit suicide. This may seem futile, but remember that almost all suicidal persons are ambivalent about these plans. A part of them wants to die, but another part does not.

As you talk, emphasize the temporary nature of the problems being faced. Emphasize how problems can be tackled one at a time. If the person is willing, help him or her to develop a plan of action to reduce some of the problems to manageable size. If the person seems to be countering every suggestion with a "yes, but" or if he is so depressed that he does not appear to hear what you are saying or he remains confused, then the person needs professional help quickly.

Whatever you do, or however the conversation goes, you and others need to stay in touch with this person. Call. Go by unannounced for a visit. Do some things together. Build the network of support by asking other friends, without revealing confidences, to stay in touch with the person.

**4. Get professional help.** These suggestions may frighten you because it seems you are in over your head. Use that fear to seek further help. Get the person in touch with a professional who can provide counseling, medication if needed and hospitalization if required.

The first person to contact may be the family physician, although this is not always the best choice, especially if the physician just does some reassuring and prescribes some medication. A person who is seriously suicidal needs more than that. Consider a referral to a pastoral counselor, psychologist, clinical social worker or psychiatrist.

It is best if the person makes the appointment himself, but in some cases it is permissible to make the initial contact yourself. The referral should be made with the clear understanding that you are going to remain in touch.

If the person refuses further help, then stay in touch and build the network of supportive friends. Also,

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*Almost all persons who are suicidal have a part of them that wishes to live.*

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realize the limits of your responsibility. You can only do so much. Do not try to become a therapist or counselor; you are a concerned friend.

Informed, caring persons who are alert to the clues of suicide, can prevent some suicides. Almost all persons who are suicidal have a part of them that wishes to live. Most suicidal persons send out messages to those around them about their intentions. When the messages are heard and a caring response is made, lives can be saved. ■

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*Blackburn, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Kerrville, Texas, is the author of What You Should Know About Suicide (Contact Telministries, 1982). This article was adapted from a new Christian Life Commission pamphlet, "Critical Issues: Suicide Prevention."*

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## PACs Spend \$71 Million Courting November Vote

Campaign spending by special-interest political committees for November's House and Senate elections surpassed \$71 million this summer, the Federal Election Commission reported.

Total PAC contributions to federal candidates for the 18-month period ending June 30 were \$78 million, including money given to those not up for election this year.

That compares to \$57 million given by PACs in the comparable 1983-84 election cycle and \$38 million in 1981-82.

Leading the PAC were the Realtors Political Action Committee with \$1.4 million and the National Education Association PAC, \$1 million.

Top money raiser among all PACs was Fund For America's Future, started by Vice President George Bush in 1985 with the stated purpose of supporting Republican candidates. The PAC, which is also widely viewed as a vehicle to aid Bush's presidential campaign, raised \$8.2 million during the period and spent \$5.3 million.

The other top money raisers were two conservative PACs which often do not give directly to a candidate but spend money independently of candidates' campaign organizations.

National Congressional Club, affiliated with Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., raised \$8 million, and, according to the FEC, spent \$8.5 million. The National Conservative PAC raised \$7.7 and spent about the same.

There are 4,421 PACs registered with the FEC. Five years ago there were 2,678. In September legislation was pending in Congress to limit the total amount of money a candidate could accept from PACs.

—From news reports

## Official Poverty Rate Records Slight Decline

Poverty in the U.S. is down, according to a Census Bureau report.

But don't tell that to the people standing in line at rescue missions and soup kitchens—especially in states hardest hit by the double whammy of oil and farm crises.

The Census' 1985 numbers show poverty down 0.4% and median family income up 1.3%, reflecting what a bureau official called genuine "economic growth" and improved living standards.

The bureau reported that 33,064,000 Americans or 14% of the population had incomes below the government's official poverty line last year.

The total reflects a slight drop from 1984 but is still a higher rate of poverty

than at any point during the 1970s.

The official poverty line in 1985 was a cash income of \$8,573 for a family of three and \$10,989 for a family of four.

Critics of the Census' controversial figures point out that blacks are undercounted and the homeless are not included.

—From news reports

## Living Longer Means More Grandparenting

For the first time, most American adults are living long enough to get to know their grandchildren.

Sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore says a child born in the U.S. in 1900 had only a 50% chance of having two or more living grandparents by age 15.

Today's chance, he says, is 90%.

Cherlin studied relationships of 510 grandparents and their grandchildren.

—USA TODAY

## Poll Says Television Glamorizes Drug Use

Nearly two-thirds of adults in a *New York Times*-CBS News Poll said movies and television shows encourage illegal drug use by making it seem glamorous.

When asked to name a particular movie or program which glamorizes drug use, 11% named "Miami Vice." No other TV show received as much as a 1% mention.

NBC network officials were stung by the poll.

Betty Hudson, NBC vice president of corporate and media relations, said, "There has never been a story line in 'Miami Vice' that dealt with the drug world where the user or dealer did not wind up in a negative circumstance.

"We believe we are doing a fair and responsible job" in addressing drug-related program themes, she added.

While the frequently implied message of the popular TV series is that crime does not pay, dealers and pushers often are depicted as enjoying the good life.

Robert L. DuPont, a physician and drug consultant who was the first director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said TV recently had done a better job on deglamorizing drug use.

"But there are a couple of themes we should be concerned about, particularly in movies. One of them is tweaking the nose of the establishment, both in drama and in comedy where drug routines become part of making fun of middle America and traditional values.

"The second is much more subtle: that is of saying yes to pleasure where you get the curious kind of intertwining

of drug issues with love, relaxation and excitement."

—The Tennessean

## Study Cites Obstacles To Home Sex Education

More than 800,000 teenage pregnancies in the U.S. each year and 2 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases among people 25 and younger underscore the need for parents to talk to their children about sex.

Why don't they?

In a study funded by the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Program, Department of Health and Human Services, sociologist Greer Litton Fox of the University of Tennessee found that talking about sex is risky for both parents and teens.

He cites several reasons for the reluctance to discuss sexuality:

- Finding out. Teens often fear that talking is tantamount to admitting an interest in sex. Many parents fear they will find out their child is already sexually active and then they will have to do something about it.

- Privacy. Parents don't want to violate their kids' privacy.

- Timing. "Parents feel that if they don't bring up the topic just right, at just the right time, then communication isn't possible. But since it's difficult to engineer the right moment, there isn't much communication."

Keeping lines of communication open is essential for healthy sex education in the home, Fox says.

—USA TODAY

## Illiteracy Remains A National Tragedy

Adult illiteracy remains a national tragedy.

The recent documentary *At a Loss for Words*, an ABC-TV and PBS joint effort, included some startling statistics. Although experts disagree on the numbers, an estimated 23 million adults in this country cannot read, write or reason beyond a 4th-grade level. Another 35 million cannot function beyond an 8th-grade level.

Estimated cost to society is enormous: more than \$200 billion a year in welfare checks, crime, incompetence, lost taxes and special educational programs.

Private and public programs reach only 2 million adults who need help. Federal and state governments combined spend \$5 to \$12 per functionally illiterate adult.

And every year, the ranks of the functionally illiterate swell by another 2.3 million adults.

—USA TODAY



## Farm Population Shows Abrupt 7 Percent Drop

U.S. farm population declined 7% between 1984 and 1985, the decade's first significant change in farm population.

A report by the Census Bureau and the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service showed farm population fell by 399,000 to a total of 5.36 million.

The decline, it said, can probably be traced to "the current financial stress faced by the farm sector."

In other cases, more young people may have moved off the farm to seek other employment than in the past.

Biggest regional declines were 16% in both the West and the South where many marginal, part-time farmers left as debts piled up.

The Midwest held its own, but that will probably change since 60% of the country's financially troubled farmers are in that region.

The trend toward fewer but bigger farms is also continuing.

The report calculated that 2.2% of the nation's total population lived on a farm in 1985.

—The Washington Post

## Drug Use Now Parents' No. 1 School Concern

For the first time in the 18-year history of the annual Gallup Poll on education, the public has identified drugs as the biggest problem confronting the schools.

Drug use was listed by 28% of those interviewed as their top concern, followed by 24% who cited lack of discipline. Lack of financial support ranked third with 11%.

In 16 of the 17 previous Gallup sur-

veys, lack of discipline was singled out as the schools' major problem.

By wide margins, adults said they favored expulsion of students caught using drugs and allowing teachers to search lockers for drugs.

—From news reports

## Seven More States Raise Drinking Age

Seven more states have raised the legal drinking age to 21.

Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin and South Carolina raised the age limit in September, and Hawaii joined the list Oct. 1.

The week before the Oct. 1 deadline, only eight states and the District of Columbia had failed to comply with a federal mandate to set the drinking age at 21. They face a 5% cut in federal highway funds.

Those states are Ohio, Louisiana, Colorado, Tennessee, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and South Dakota.

—USA TODAY

## Women Own One-Fourth Of Country's Firms

Women now own nearly one-fourth of the nation's business, excluding large corporations.

An analysis of the 1982 U.S. Economic Census found that women owned 2.9 million businesses—23.9% of the total at that time. That represents a significant jump from an estimated 5% a decade before.

Receipts generated by those firms amounted to 10.2% of all income from those types of companies.

The report did not include large corporations—those with more than 25 shareholders.

Personal services, such as laundries

and cleaning services, beauty shops, photographers and baby-sitting services, were the most common businesses owned by women, the report said.

—The Washington Post

## Lobbying Congress Is a Big Business

Oil and farming may be in trouble, but the business of lobbying Congress is doing quite well.

There are now 8,500 registered lobbyists, up 500 from the start of this year and up 2,000 from a year ago.

Preliminary figures show more than \$14 million was spent on lobbying in the second quarter, bringing the six-month total to an estimated \$17 million.

—USA TODAY

## Face of U.S. Poor Is Getting Younger

The face of America's poor is growing younger, says a Census Bureau study based on a reexamination of a controversial year-old report.

The study found that the poverty rate among the elderly declined from 1970 to 1984 but increased among young, uneducated, jobless people with children.

The new report on poverty in 1984 adds detail to a study issued a year ago which showed a slight decline in the national poverty rate.

Between 1970 and 1984 the percentage of families headed by someone aged 24 and younger who were in poverty rose from 15.5% to 25.4%. In the 24-44 age group poverty also increased, from 9.5% to 13.2%.

—From news reports

"On the Moral Scene" is compiled and edited by the editor.

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# New Videotape Series Gives Help for Families



A new four-part videotape series on the family produced by the Christian Life Commission and the Southern Baptist Videotape Service provides help and encouragement for families struggling with tough problems.

This new series of "Help for Families" videotapes features the popular marriage and family specialist, Dr. Charles Petty, who deals with timely, sensitive subjects in a professional but down-to-earth manner.

Dr. Petty addresses the subjects of pornography, television, changing roles in marriage, and divorce. He has an uncanny knack for addressing these weighty topics with a fine blend of humor, honesty and forthrightness. Petty's entertaining delivery will help Christians remember the sound biblical principles he shares and will help them to apply them to everyday life.

These videotapes, filmed before a live audience, are excellent for use with large or small groups in a church or retreat setting or at home.

This series is in great demand so don't wait. Reserve your show dates now. Rental fee is \$10 per title. Videotapes can be purchased for \$25 each in 1/2" VHS format or \$35 each in 3/4" U-Matic format.

**Help for Families: Pornography**—Points out four dimensions of a person's sexuality and how pornography impacts on each of these areas. Discusses how pornography adversely affects a family and tells how a family can insulate itself from pornography.

**Help for Families: Television**—Discusses television's impact upon families and what families, especially those with children, can do to avoid negative viewing habits.

**Help for Families: Changing Roles in Marriage**—Examines traditional male and female roles which are in great transition and discusses concepts of authority, submission, equality and leadership in marriage.

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