

Light

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST CONVENTION

MAY/JUNE 1988

"LIVE AS FREE MEN"

1 PETER 2:16 (RSV)

Freedom has special meaning for Christians. Jesus modeled an authentic freedom which he called his disciples to follow. They endured hostility from Jew and Roman alike because they had found life and freedom

in Christ. And in describing their responsibilities related to government, the early Christians were called upon to "live as free men" (1 Peter 2:16, RSV).

These words may sound to us like strange instructions to Christians of the early church. As members of a minority religious faith who were increasingly persecuted, these early Christians might have been regarded by the casual bystander as anything but free. They lived under the iron-fisted rule of the Roman Empire, which was often cruel and tyrannical. Political participation was closed to most people of that day.

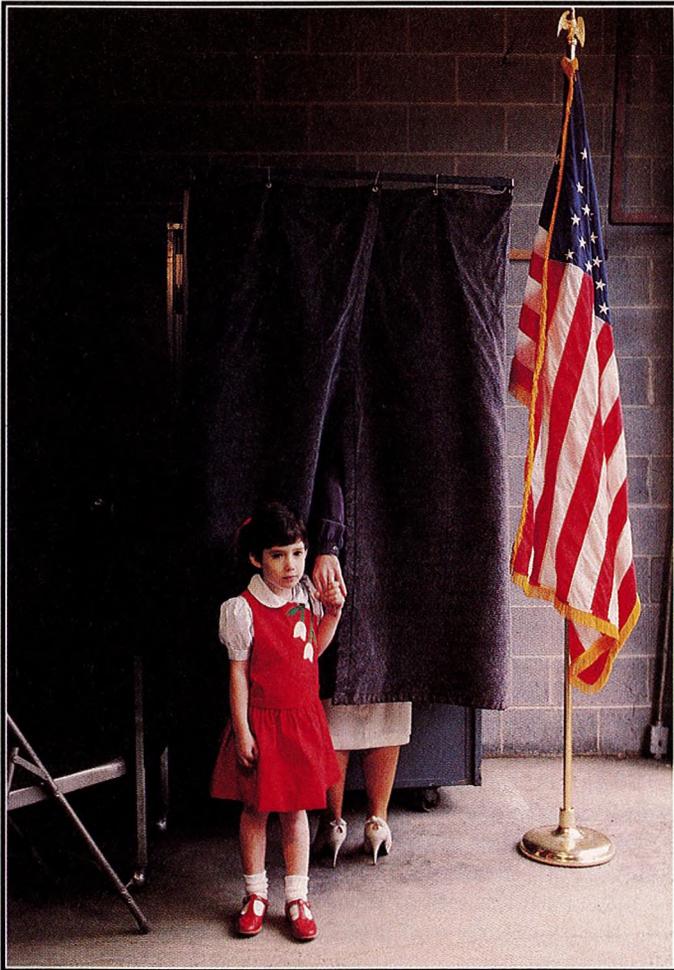
Yet, those early Christians were admonished to be subject not only to all human institutions and to honor the emperor, but also to "live as free men."

Living as free persons limits the degree to which we are to submit to any human institution, including government. Recognizing that government is ordained of God, Christians have a loyalty to God which imposes a duty to obey God even if that comes into conflict with laws and governing officials.

But freedom also has a political dimension that requires involvement and participation. A "free" person is one with certain political rights and privileges. Christians, in their freedom, are not only to participate in whatever way possible, but to do so by standards of good rather than evil. Christians are to exercise their political rights and privileges, whatever they are and however broad they may be, with the realization that responsible participation is a form of serving God.

Christian Citizenship Sunday, on July 3, 1988, is a time to emphasize our commitment to a Christian understanding of government as ordained of God and of political involvement as an expression of our servanthood. Since Christ has set us free, let us truly "live as free men." ■

--Larry Braidfoot

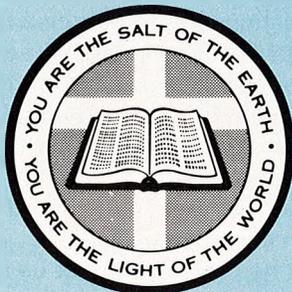


Observe Christian Citizenship Sunday
July 3, 1988

- 2 Baker's Reflections
- 3 Pornography Battle
- 6 Anti-Pornography Resources
- 7 On the Moral Scene
- 8 1988 Citizenship Theme
- 9 Planning for Citizenship Sunday
- 10 Hunger Giving Falters
- 11 Hunger Gifts by States
- 12 Dangers of Civil Religion
- 14 Nuclear Clock Slows
- 15 Summer Conferences
- 16 Citizenship Sunday Resources

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 Larry Baker, Executive Director
 Tim Fields, Editor
 Edith Wilson, Editorial Assistant



**Christian Life
 Commission
 Of The Southern
 Baptist Convention**
 P. O. Box 25266
 Nashville, TN 37202-5266

The Purpose of the Church

Say the word, "church," and many people think of a building or of a denomination. Others think of church programs and activities such as Bible teaching, worship and preaching. For many, the word points to Sunday or other specified times related to the church building.

Many do not give serious thought to the purpose of the church, its buildings, its gatherings or its activities. The question of the church's purpose can be framed in many ways, but in simplest terms it asks, "Why are we here?"

What is the church's reason for being? Its goal? The grand design that God has for his people? The guiding reality that should give shape and direction to the church's life?

Jesus' words to his disciples, ". . . the works that I do ye shall do also" (John 14:12), are a good starting point. A contemporary minister stated the church's purpose to be "a redemptive force in the world by proclaiming and demonstrating Christ's love and ministry."

To do the works of Jesus is to give attention to a variety of causes and commitments that exemplify the pattern of his life.

To proclaim and demonstrate the full range of Christ's love and ministry is not easy. An examination of church life today indicates that a vital aspect of the church's purpose is lacking or missing. Virile Christianity willing to challenge contemporary principalities and powers is often missing. Prophetic Christianity is in short supply and may be an endangered species.

The Jews in Jesus' day killed the prophets. Usually we don't. We usually take the painless approach of excising the prophetic message from the church's life, confining the prophetic note to a place of irrelevance or assigning the prophets to the pages of the church's history.

One can tell when prophetic Christianity is in danger. This develops when the church:

- . places primary emphasis on institutional success,
- . emphasizes health, wealth and success,
- . preoccupies itself with private religious practice,
- . marries secular political agendas, parties and movements,
- . over-invests in political means to accomplish desirable ends,
- . stresses religious shibboleths and code words,
- . misunderstands the prophetic role and message in biblical faith,
- . confuses moral indignation with self-interest,
- . loses its capacity to confront evil in the name of the gospel,
- . gags or muzzles truth-tellers,
- . loses its vision of what can be when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

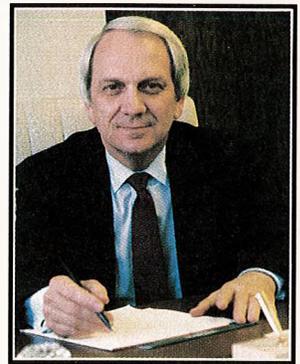
These danger signs are in ample supply in our common life. Southern Baptists must deal with this question: How can we recapture a concern for prophetic Christianity in 1988?

Three actions can begin the recovery: (1) reevaluation of our life and ministry in light of Jesus; (2) renewal of commitment to all of biblical Christianity; and (3) reclaiming our prophetic heritage and assignment.

With the Bible in our hands, with the call of Jesus in our hearts and his life before our eyes, with a sin-infected world and broken humanity at our fingertips we can be God's prophetic people.

We must not be satisfied with a fainthearted, anemic religious practice. We must not settle for a caricature or pale reflection of biblical Christianity. We must not stand quietly when prophetic Christianity is missing from the church's agenda.

No! It is time to shout for all to hear: "We [shall] be God's prophets, Spokesmen for the truth and right; Standing firm for Godly justice, Bringing evil into light."



Larry Baker

THE BATTLE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

Shaping Convictions

By N. Larry Baker

Editors Note: This article was adapted from an address given to a Religious Alliance Against Pornography meeting March 2, 1988 in Washington, D. C.

When the moral and social issues that plague our lives and world are numerous, complex, urgent and demanding, why should we give our attention to pornography?

Each of us comes to the issue of pornography and to this battle with some sense of what life ought to be like. Call it what you will, it is there --inside our heads, beating in our hearts, giving direction to our commitments, directing our energies. It causes us to be *for* some things and *against* others. It makes us advocates and adversaries at one and the same time.

Behind our action is theology--a statement about the ultimate nature of things. Behind our action is an ethic--a statement about the obligation or nature of human behavior.

I invite you to consider with me some of the theology and ethic behind our action. I begin with three disclaimers.

Disclaimers

Our abhorrence of pornography is not the result of an anti-sexual theology. The Bible is not anti-sexual, and it is not Victorian. Look at the Bible's treatment of human sexuality and the ways in which we human beings deal with sex. The Bible is both realistic and candid about sex. The Bible understands

both the potential and the peril contained in our sexuality. In its treatment of sex, the Bible is both celebrative and explicit. Our opposition to pornography grows out of an appreciation for human sexuality, not opposition to it or embarrassment about it or a rejection of it.

Our opposition to pornography does not grow out of a desire to make society into our own image.

We live in a pluralistic society--one formed of many cultural streams, multiple religious heritages and diverse value systems. We want to protect others even as we vigilantly guard our own. The freedoms guaranteed by our nation's charter documents are to be protected for the welfare of all and not simply to undergird our well-being. We know that the good, the true and the beautiful are expressed in many ways. We know that many patterns of life acknowledge and enhance human dignity.

We are not interested in making American life look like ourselves. We are not interested in imposing our way of thinking on all who differ with us.

But, we are committed to encourage that which cultivates human dignity. We are committed to stand against anything and everything that undermines or destroys human dignity.

Our abhorrence of pornography is not simply a recent concern born of a narrow social or political agenda. The issue of pornography is one which has been a long-standing concern to the constituency which

we serve. Unlike our Roman Catholic brethren, we Southern Baptists do not do pastoral letters. Our constituency often expresses itself through resolutions adopted at our annual meetings. Since 1977, the Southern Baptist Convention has adopted nine resolutions which deal with pornography.

It is no secret that Southern Baptists are--by and large--conservative on moral issues. So our moral opposition to pornography is consistent with many of our other stances.

But something important has happened with this issue. While concern about pornography and its harmful effects may have traditionally been a "conservative" issue, this has changed. In recent years, individuals and groups of many different persuasions have become

Since 1977, The Southern Baptist Convention has adopted nine resolutions that deal with pornography.

deeply concerned about the harmful effects of pornography, especially those varieties that involve obscenity and child pornography and the distribution of such materials to minors.

Neither is our concern about pornography to be construed as a single-issue concern. The Christian Life Commission is concerned also about issues of hunger and peace, abortion and social justice, AIDS and the environment.

Shaping Convictions

Several important convictions give shape to and undergird our action in combating obscenity and child pornography. Behind our action is the conviction that **persons matter**. They matter to themselves, to others and to God.

The Bible exalts human personality as earth's greatest
(continued on page 4)

...Pornography

(continued from page 3)

treasure. When you open the Bible to its very first chapter you read the words, "God created man in his own image. . . male and female created he them." Within the blood and brains and sinew of each human being is the touch of the Creator, the likeness of the Author of life.

When we come to the New Testament and to the teachings of Jesus, we really begin to understand how precious the person is. Jesus declared, as no one ever before him had declared, that the person is of all-surpassing worth.

That belief shines in everything he does. It looks out from his eyes when they are happiest and when they are saddest. It trembles in the most loving consolations and thunders in the most passionate rebukes that come from his lips. It is the inspiration of his compassion and his indignation.

In stark contrast to all of that is what we know as pornography. It depersonalizes individuals and makes things of them. Women are used, misused, abused. These women are faces without names and without personhood. They are often presented as parts of their body--to be fondled, abused and explored. They are recipients of male sexual aggression, valuable only as they function sexually. They are pieces of meat on human display and receptacles to provide male sexual release.

Over against the biblical commitment to persons is pornography. It sexualizes bigotry and promotes the abuse of women. It kills the self-esteem of women and thwarts their potential. The bottom line of pornography is that women aren't human beings. They don't deserve to be treated as persons. They are objects, animals, things.

When we look at the evidence, we know: Men and women cannot hope to be fully human in a society which militates against their best efforts to be so with a flood of filth.

Men and women cannot be fully human in a society which spawns sexual forces which dehumanize them. Men and women cannot be fully human in a society which unleashes sexual demons in them and on them.

Behind our action is the conviction that **families matter**. No institution plays a more important role in human life than the family. It is the beginning point of biological life and most other things. The family gets us first and keeps us longest. Family relationships play a powerful role in our lives. The family is our major source of cultural understanding and imprints that with emotional finality. In its own distinct way, the family serves as an educational institution without equal in our

Throughout its history, the church has fought tenaciously every force that would destroy the home.

culture. It is, as Martin Luther named it, "a school for living." Within it, we receive our first images of the world around us, of others and of ourselves.

The Old Testament and New Testament alike begin with families--with stories of the relationships of Adam and Eve and their children; with Mary, Joseph and Jesus and relationships within the family setting. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, the family is thrust into prominence by writers who heard the word from God and recorded it.

Throughout its history, the church has given great attention to the family and expressed its interest with a considerable degree of consistency. From time to time, it has attempted to give some guidance for every phase of family living. It has attempted to keep before its people and before the wider society an understanding of the nature, purposes and importance of the family.

Throughout its history, the church has fought tenaciously every force that would destroy the home. When some power emerged that threatened the family, we cried out with outrage. When some evil clutched the family in its stranglehold, we mobilized our forces to break its grip. When some malevolent force developed that would disturb, debilitate or destroy the patterns that encourage wholesome family living, we refused to remain silent.

Behind our action is the conviction that **children matter**. In biblical religion children hold a valued place. They are valued, nurtured, taught, disciplined, encouraged and protected. They are seen in many ways--as promissory notes of the future, as signs that God has not given up on his world, as illustrations of faith.

The Bible encourages parents to see their children as gifts from God. Jesus pointedly taught that children are to be accepted and respected (Matthew 18:1-6). The Old Testament spelled out responsibilities of parents for their children. In the biblical pattern the family is called to be the cocoon in which babies grow to maturity, learn how to relate to themselves, to others and to God (Luke 2:51).

The importance of children is portrayed vividly in the ministry of Jesus. Matthew 19:13-15 recounts the event. It is set in the midst of an adult world when things are rather sticky. It is approaching the climax of Jesus' ministry. Those who were opposed to that ministry were pressing in upon him from all sides. His own disciples were too concerned about his schedule, and everything was beginning to fly apart. In the midst of all of this, few wanted to be bothered with sticky-fingered little children. They came, brought by doting mothers, to shake hands with the preacher. And Jesus said, "Why not?" He took time for them, graciously, individually blessing them. And they responded. This strange intrusion in the climax of Matthew's gospel indicates that there is something going on for the least of God's creation.

Increasingly, sex deviates and pornography peddlers have joined forces to wage war on our children and to exploit them.

This perspective and the world of pornography are at war. Increasingly, children are the subjects of pornography. Increasingly, they are trapped in sexual activity with other children. Increasingly, they are lured into sexual activity with adults. Increasingly, sex deviates and pornography peddlers have joined forces to wage war on our children and to exploit them.

We must judge our homes, our schools, our churches and our society by what they do for the child. We must judge our behavior by what it does to the child.

Children are dependent upon us for their well-being. During infancy and for many years following they are dependent upon us for physical things, for their mental growth and development, for their concepts, for their ideals, for their understanding and for their spiritual development. Without us they cannot enter into the inheritance, the future, that God dreams for them.

Behind our action is the conviction that **character matters**. The Bible doesn't talk about *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, pornography or x-rated videotapes. But it has some very specific warnings about certain behaviors. Consider the words of Proverbs 29:3; 31:3; 23:26-28; 30:20; 5:1-14. Here are passages out of a part of the Bible not frequently used. Because of the cultural qualities of the day, the text warns men about the conduct of women. It was unthinkable that most women would engage in promiscuous relationships. But a few women might entice and lead astray many men, were they so inclined.

The words of warning were

intended to interrupt the thoughts and desires of men who might be tempted by what they saw. One finds here a profound awareness that what one sees can become internalized in one's character and thereby lead to behavior that is destructive. Thoughts can turn into curiosity, which can turn into lust, which will likely lead to actions.

What are the fruits of the promiscuous lifestyle? Some visible fruits are rampaging epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, child sexual abuse and abortions. More subtle fruits are the alienation, rejection and scorn which sometimes characterize human relations; mental images of unreal persons and relationships may divert attention and commitment from one's marital partner.

These fruits of promiscuous lifestyles would not be rooted out of human nature even if pornographic materials were eliminated. That is the nature of the human condition.

But it is clear that pornographic materials, with an intentional appeal to the erotic and emotional side of human nature, have a lasting effect.

The effects of these pornographic images and experiences show up months and years, and even decades, later in negative, harmful, destructive ways.

We need to be sounding loudly a word of warning about pornography. It is an influence which imbeds itself in human personality. As it does, it distorts and interferes with a sense of intentionality in relationships, priorities and self-control. Although its influence may not show up immediately, it will have long-term consequences which we may not yet be able to anticipate.

I think our message about pornography and its effects needs to be strong and foreboding: When you have sex with someone, you are having sex with all of the fantasies and illusions that person has had, whether induced by personal contact, television, magazines, videotapes or nude dancers.

That which is seen, nurtured and

fostered in the mind becomes a part of the person and, probably, the behavior. The harm may not be apparent today or tomorrow or even next year. But it lurks in the recesses of the soul, seeking an opportunity to devour.

One other conviction shapes our action: **The Bible champions the cause of the underdog**. David's defeat of Goliath and Israel's victory over the Pharaoh are more than episodes of biblical history. They are

We need to be sounding loudly a word of warning about pornography. It is an influence which imbeds itself in human personality.

pictures of the way God views life.

God's commitment is frequently to people who seem to be losers. The prophets and the apostles were called as God's people to live as their compassionate God lived. The poor and the powerless, the hungry and the homeless, the voiceless and defenseless, the sinful and those sinned against--all were foci of God's love. Remember the words of the Psalmist when he said, "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation" (Psalm 68:5).

Furthermore, God judges our righteousness on the basis of our commitment to justice. Hear the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 1:16-17): "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

The God of the Bible is a God of active justice who seeks to undo wrongs. God is a God of compassionate justice who guards the rights of the powerless. God is a God of effective justice who knows how easy it is to abuse those who have no defender.

(continued on page 6)

...Pornography

(continued from page 5)

The biblical commitment to justice can be extended to the matter of pornography. If God has concern for the defenseless and asks us to share that concern, then that concern should be extended to those victimized, abused, humiliated, enslaved and destroyed by pornography.

Conclusion

I come back to the original question, "Why, in a world like ours do we spend our energy fighting pornography?"

The answer is clear: We are powered by a concern for persons, for families, for children, for character and a commitment to justice.

We also look the demon called pornography squarely in the eye. We are deeply troubled by the havoc that it wreaks on human life. We hear the painful stories of women, we see the abused children, we deal with men crippled and anguished by their pornographic addiction. We measure the exorbitant price tag of destruction that pornography unleashes on our families and on our society.

The shaping convictions and the human situation collide. In the process, our hearts are broken.

***We cannot remain silent.
We cannot remain
disengaged. We cannot
be passive. We must
join the battle.***

Even so, indignation, anger and rage boil up within us. We know: We cannot remain silent. We cannot remain disengaged. We cannot be passive.

We must join the battle . ■

Baker is executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission .

ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY RESOURCES ORDER FORM

The following resources are designed to help fight pornography.

Quan.	Pamphlets	Price	Total
	What to Do About Pornography	.20	
	Pornography and the Law	.20	
	Issues and Answers: Pornography	.20	
	Help for Television Viewers Awareness/Action Guide	2.00	
	Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography	9.95	

Quan.	Audiovisual Resources	Size	Purchase	Rental	Show Date
	The Battle Against Obscenity: A Plan for Action	[] 1/2" VHS	75.00	35.00	
		[] 3/4" U-Matic	75.00	35.00	
	Help for Families: Pornography By: Dr. Charles Petty	[] 1/2" VHS	25.00	10.00	
		[] 3/4" U-Matic	35.00	10.00	
	Help for Families: Television By: Dr. Charles Petty	[] 1/2" VHS	25.00	10.00	
		[] 3/4" U-Matic	35.00	10.00	

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ON THE MORAL SCENE

Families with Kids Fare Worse in Today's Economy

Median family income rose 20 percent from 1970 to 1986 after adjustments, but the gains were uneven and families with children fared worse than other groups, a study released recently said.

The mixed news came from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office in an analysis that contradicts a widespread impression, based on other studies, that family income has stopped growing.

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., one of those who sought the CBO report, said it suggests positive general trends in family income. But Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., who made a separate request for the analysis said it contained plenty of bad news as well.

"Even among those families for whom incomes rose, CBO found that the principal reason among the non-elderly was the increased number of workers per family. In many families, both parents must now work to maintain the standard of living," said Miller, who released the report at a hearing of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, which he chairs.

--*The Tennessean*

Larry Baker Delivers Dial-a-porn Testimony

Evidence of a federal crackdown on pornography surfaced at the White House and on Capitol Hill recently as President Reagan signed legislation banning "dial-a-porn" telephone services and a congressional committee began consideration of sweeping legislation to protect children from sexual exploitation.

Southern Baptist Convention support for both developments was visible as well in the presence of SBC Christian Life Commission

Executive Director N. Larry Baker at the signing ceremony and in testimony the CLC chief delivered before the House Subcommittee on Crime.

The ban on the dial-a-porn services came in the form of an amendment to an \$8.3 billion reauthorization of most federal elementary, secondary and adult education programs passed by Congress April 20. The provision outlawing sexually explicit telephone messages was approved by the Senate, 98-0, and by the House of Representatives, 274-17. Signing the entire bill April 28, Reagan commended Congress for including the dial-a-porn prohibition.

Several religious leaders were invited by the White House to witness the signing, including Baker, Christian psychologist James Dobson, and National Coalition Against Pornography President Jerry Kirk.

Earlier the same day, Baker and Kirk were joined by three other anti-pornography activists urging congressional approval of H.R. 3889, the Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act of 1988.

A controversial section of the proposed law calls for including the people who traffic in child pornography under the federal anti-racketeering statute by allowing for the seizure of their profits and other property.

In his testimony, Baker urged inclusion of this "forfeiture" provision as necessary to curb the traffic of child pornography in interstate commerce. Giving federal law enforcement agents authority to confiscate pornographers' assets "can be one of the most effective means of curtailing the ongoing nature of (their) corporate illegal behavior," Baker testified.

--*Baptist Press*

Stroke Risk High For Women Smokers

Women who smoke are more than twice as likely to suffer strokes as those who don't, suggests a new study.

Dr. Graham Colditz of Harvard Medical School and other colleagues studied 118,539 women, age 30 to 55, over an eight year term.

Stroke risk for those who smoked up to 14 cigarettes a day was 2.2 times as high as for non-smokers. It was 3.7 times as high for those who smoked 25 or more cigarettes a day.

The study--in the *New England Journal of Medicine*--is the most comprehensive to show an increased stroke risk for women smokers, says Colditz. Previous studies have shown a similar risk for men who smoke, he says.

"These studies--with the known relation of cigarette smoking to heart disease--make a fairly clear message for smokers," says Colditz.

The increased stroke incidence his study found among smokers was not limited to those with high blood pressure or other stroke risks. "All smokers are at increased risk."

A stroke is a blockage of blood to the brain, or bleeding into the brain, says Colditz.

About 43 percent of the 400,000 strokes each year are fatal.

--*USA TODAY*

Birth Rate Highest Since 1964

Births in the USA jumped 3 percent last year to 3.8 million, the highest level since 1964, the National Center for Health Statistics reported.

A National Center demographer credits a strong economy: "This is family building. People have some confidence. They may be feeling it's now or never, and they can afford" to have a child.

Stephanie Ventura, a Center statistician, explains there are a growing number of women in child-bearing years and the birth rate is higher.

--*USA TODAY*

THE CHALLENGE TO "LIVE AS FREE MEN"

Theme Interpretation for Christian Citizenship Sunday July 3, 1988

By Larry Braidfoot

The 1980s have been years of much talk and some action by Christians concerned about politics. The presidential elections have featured lengthy debates about the proper role of religion in political life.

There has been a definite increase in the involvement of Christians in politics. It is not yet clear whether the increased involvement will last.

As Christians, we are called to "Live as Free Men." This call comes to men and to women regardless of race, vocation, age or economic status. The call requires certain actions on our part.

The call to "Live as Free Men" is a challenge to be **informed**. Free persons make up their own minds, on the basis of information. This is especially true for those of us who live in a democracy. The call to live as free persons comes to humans in all nations, to persons living under all forms of government. But those of us who are Christians in a society which allows wide participation have an extra responsibility. We need to be informed, and we need to act.

A congressional aide shared the story of handling calls and correspondence related to a major bill in Congress. Over 90 percent of those contacting that office had urged a specific course of action. Yet that Representative was going to disregard those calls and letters. Why? Because the vast majority of people contacting that Representative had their facts wrong.

The call to "Live as Free Men" is a challenge to be **concerned**. American politics needs concerned people. There are many special-interest groups which crusade for one issue, but few which champion a broad array of issues and causes which affect our society. A recent experience illustrates the dire need for concern.

A group of citizens went to the office of a key state legislator to urge him to vote against a bill to legalize gambling in that state. Several of them mentioned organized crime and the predatory nature of gambling as reasons for opposition.

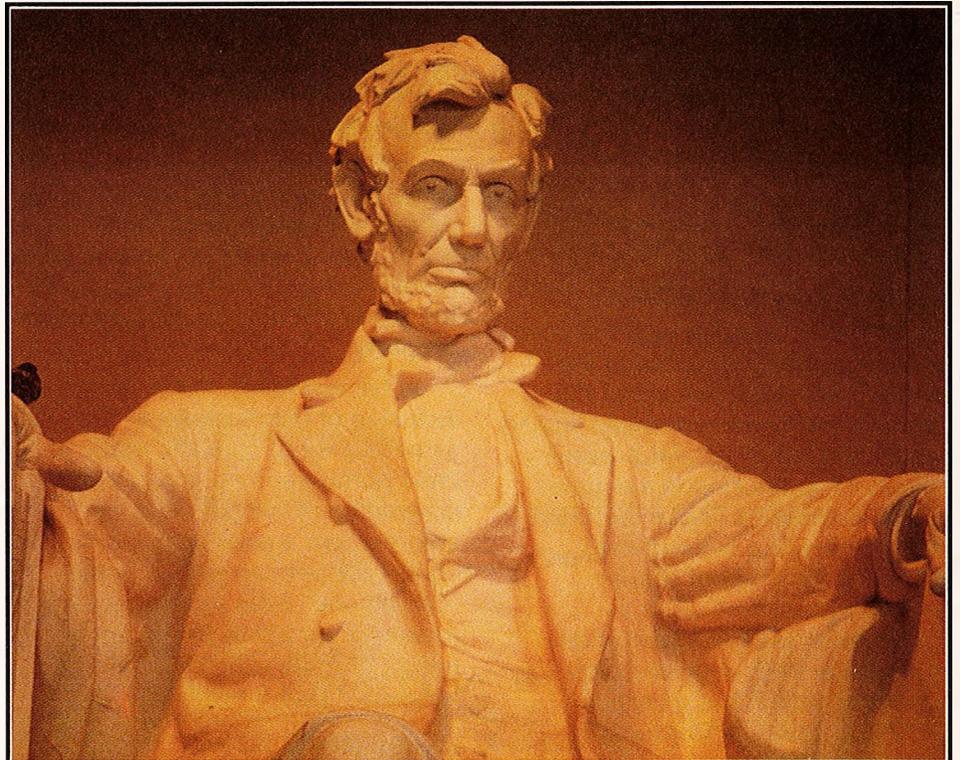
The legislator's response was chilling: "If you're concerned about crime, I wish you had been at the hearings we had on that subject several weeks ago. If you're concerned about poor people, I need your help in dealing with the problems of children in poverty."

Our concern needs to be consistent and ongoing.

The call to "Live as Free Men" is a challenge to be **persistent**. The shaping of our society is a task which is an ongoing struggle. Those who represent a special interest, regardless of its nature, have focused objectives. They stay active on the issue, working to advance their cause or to beat off threats to their position. As Christians we have lost on many social issues because the other side tried harder and didn't give up. They beat us down by their persistence.

If we want to change society, to transform it for Christ, we must truly live as free persons. We must act in an informed manner, out of a depth of concern and with persistence. ■

Braidfoot directs Christian citizenship concerns for the Christian Life Commission.



PLANNING FOR CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP SUNDAY

Ideas for Worship, Assembly and Study

Christian citizenship is a biblical mandate which can be incorporated into many facets of the life of the local church. One of the best Christian citizenship resources is the *Baptist Hymnal* (page references are to the 1975 edition). The hymns and responsive readings below can be easily used in worship and in Sunday School classes and assemblies.

HYMNS

- "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" (p. 270)
- "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life" (p. 311)
- "Faith of Our Fathers" (p. 143)
- "God of Our Fathers" (p. 149)
- "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (p. 37)
- "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee" (p. 369)
- "Jesus Is Lord of All" (p. 353)
- "God of Grace and God of Glory" (p. 265)
- "America, the Beautiful" (p. 508)
- "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" (p. 510)

- "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" (p. 511)
- "O God of Our Fathers" (p. 507)
- "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (p. 171)
- "Stir Thy Church, O God, Our Father" (p. 269)

RESPONSIVE READINGS

- No. 514 Psalm 24:7-10
- No. 518 Psalm 19:1-3,7-14
- No. 595 James 2:14-18
- No. 597 Matthew 25:34-40
- No. 599 Galatians 5:22-26
- No. 600 1 John 3:17-18
- No. 604 Hebrews 13:20-21
- No. 606 Isaiah 6:1-9
- No. 607 1 Corinthians 13
- No. 609 Psalms 1:1-6; 15:1-2
- No. 610 Matthew 5:13-16
- No. 538 Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:14; Micah 4:3
- No. 631 Romans 13:1-3; Psalm 33:12

SCRIPTURAL EMPHASES

Christian Citizenship Sunday was first observed on the denominational calendar in 1973. Biblical themes and passages have been at the heart

of this special emphasis from the beginning. Each year a theme is selected which lends itself to a biblical emphasis in the life of the local church.

The Bible is rich in themes and verses which can be used in a citizenship emphasis. This year's theme is "Live as Free Men" and 1 Peter 2:16 is the focal scripture verse.

A number of other important themes and focal passages from earlier observances of Christian Citizenship Sunday might be useful in supplementing this year's theme and scripture:

- "Stand Fast Therefore" (Galatians 5:1)
- "Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters" (Amos 5:24)
- "Do Justice and Love Kindness" (Micah 6:8)
- "Then Do What Is Good" (Romans 13:3)
- "He That Ruleth ... Must Be Just" (2 Samuel 23:3)
- "Proclaim Liberty" (Leviticus 25:10). ■



HUNGER GIVING FALTERS

State-by-State Picture for 1987

By Robert Parham

Southern Baptist hunger giving has faltered on the eve of the tenth anniversary of World Hunger Day despite persistent reports about a developing food crisis in Africa and vigorous attempts to promote the credibility of the Convention's hunger ministries.

Total hunger giving through the Foreign and Home Mission Boards for 1987 was \$8,931,339, the third-largest amount ever given through the Convention's mission boards, but 1.7 percent below the amount contributed in 1986. The 1987 total is a staggering 24.5 percent below the record \$11,830,146 given in 1985.

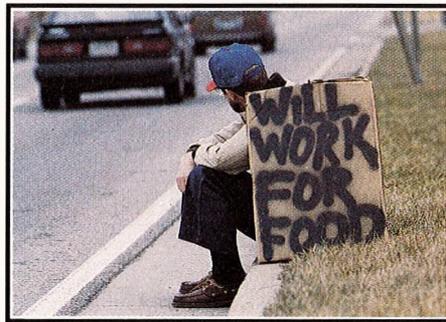
The Foreign Mission Board reported receipts of \$7,609,193, down from \$7,790,128 in 1986 and \$10,625,897 in 1985. The Home Mission Board receipts were \$1,322,146, up slightly from \$1,299,151 in 1986 and \$1,204,249 in 1985.

The increase in domestic hunger gifts reflects the continued implementation of the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention recommendation that undesignated contributions to world hunger be divided, with 80 percent going to the FMB and 20 percent going to the HMB. Prior to 1985, a number of state conventions were sending all their hunger receipts to the Foreign Mission Board.

Once again, about one-third of hunger gifts were received at the mission boards during the final quarter of the year and after the observance of World Hunger Day in early October. The HMB received 40 percent of its gifts in this recording period, compared to 35 percent for the FMB.

Virginia, the twelfth largest state convention, led all states in hunger giving with \$1,763,202, a 68 percent increase over 1986. Although Virginia has persistently been a leading state convention in hunger contributions (1984--\$657,735; 1985--\$1,036,285; and 1986--\$1,047,967), the 1987 amount includes some large individual gifts from donors.

The only other state convention to break the \$1 million mark was



Texas, the largest state convention. Georgia ranked third (\$801,148), followed by North Carolina (\$783,815) and South Carolina (\$665,187).

Texas, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina have historically led state conventions in total hunger gifts.

In terms of per-person hunger giving, Southern Baptists gave 61 cents, compared to the all-time high of 82 cents in 1985. As for per-person giving in state conventions, Virginia gave \$2.93, the largest amount ever recorded.

Two other state conventions averaged over \$1 per person in 1987: Georgia (\$1.46) and New England (\$1.27). Per capita statistics were based on membership totals reported by state conventions for 1986, the latest year for which

statistics were available.

The total 1987 figures do not reflect monies given for hunger that were utilized in local churches, associations and state conventions. Such information on a convention-wide basis currently is unavailable.

Several conclusions may be drawn from hunger giving in 1987. First, large contributions by several individuals have kept gifts from falling all the way back into the \$7 million range. Such information suggests that the overall donor base is larger than the latest plateau in giving (1980-1983), but less than that recorded in 1985 and 1986.

Second, U.S. media coverage dramatically influences giving. The lack of media coverage in 1986 and 1987 has been accompanied by a drop in giving. Correspondingly, media coverage in 1984 and 1985 caused giving to surge. The consequence of such a relationship is that long-range mission efforts to get at the root causes of malnutrition are hindered by the lack of media coverage.

Southern Baptists need to define hunger in terms more inclusive than just famine. We need to understand that chronic hunger is a day-in-day-out problem far more destructive than famine and requires long-term efforts leading to self-reliance. In order to reduce chronic undernutrition, mission efforts must have a sustained base of giving. The constant ebb and flow of receipts hinders long-range efforts.

Third, Southern Baptists are still a long way from the elusive goal of each church member giving \$1 per person to meet hunger needs through our mission boards.

Fourth, the observance of World Hunger Day in October is one of the key events to Southern Baptist hunger giving. The dearth of media coverage makes the observance of World Hunger Day much more critical. If more churches would observe World Hunger Day, hunger giving would likely increase. ■

Parham is the associate director of the Christian Life Commission responsible for hunger concerns.

FOR THE RECORD

1987 WORLD HUNGER RECEIPTS

BY STATES

State	Domestic (HMB)	Foreign (FMB)	1987 Total	1986 Total	Percent Increase/ Decrease	1987 Per Person Giving
Ala.	\$127,670	\$536,704	\$664,374	\$666,320	-.29	\$.65
Alaska	746	2,618	3,364	4,312	-21.99	.18
Ariz.	4,876	27,839	32,715	30,191	8.36	.27
Ark.	43,949	178,954	222,903	251,488	-11.37	.47
Calif.	13,611	99,189	112,800	151,937	-25.76	.29
Colo.	2,457	13,903	16,360	16,511	-.91	.26
D.C.	-0-	10,443	10,443	8,305	25.74	.38
Fla.	76,750	357,401	434,151	465,782	-6.79	.48
Ga.	131,561	669,587	801,148	1,175,952	-31.87	.66
Hawaii	4,052	15,715	19,767	27,097	-27.05	1.46
Ill.	19,677	89,309	108,986	125,986	-13.49	.46
Ind.	30	55,638	55,668	56,067	-.71	.63
Iowa	954	-0-	954	854	11.71	NA
Kans.-Neb.	5,298	23,685	28,983	54,304	-46.63	.36
Ky.	71,771	377,010	448,781	464,906	-3.47	.59
La.	41,079	162,701	203,780	268,090	-23.99	.35
Md.	1,481	21,332	22,813	61,373	-62.83	.23
Mich.	2,268	1,760	4,028	7,437	-45.84	.08
Minn.-Wis.	714	5,453	6,167	3,565	72.99	.52
Miss.	44,777	213,507	258,284	313,571	-17.63	.39
Mo.	85,157	350,626	435,783	419,545	3.87	.69
Nev.	433	1,545	1,978	4,672	-57.66	.10
N. Eng.	-0-	21,328	21,328	8,131	162.30	1.27
N. Mex.	-0-	45,216	45,216	54,540	-17.10	.38
N. York	977	19,030	20,007	13,488	48.33	.81
N.C.	124,232	659,583	783,815	813,653	-3.67	.68
No. Plains	548	3,610	4,158	3,933	5.72	.25
Ohio	5,907	30,173	36,080	50,941	-29.17	.25
Okla.	21,237	97,726	118,963	169,169	-29.68	.16
Oreg.-Wash.	7,597	24,058	31,655	31,927	-.85	.42
Pa.-So. Jersey	1,580	10,181	11,761	13,135	-10.46	.61
S.C.	67,792	597,395	665,187	666,257	-.16	.95
Tenn.	63,879	302,260	366,139	224,289	63.24	.35
Texas	207,154	888,291	1,095,445	1,334,888	-17.94	.45
Utah-Idaho	-0-	3,708	3,708	5,486	-32.41	.21
Va.	135,031	1,628,171	1,763,202	1,047,967	68.25	2.93
W. Va.	2,475	10,361	12,836	10,504	22.20	.47
Wyo.	982	4,256	5,238	6,184	-15.30	.41
Other	3,444	48,925	52,369	4,520		

Compiled from information provided by the Home and Foreign Mission Boards. Figures rounded to nearest dollar. (NA - Not Available)

THE DANGERS OF CIVIL RELIGION

Linder Warns Baptists About Mixing Piety and Politics

By Tim Fields

Participants at the annual Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission seminar in Washington, D.C. were told the church should be involved in politics.

They were warned, however, of the pitfalls of embracing a civil religion which mixes piety and patriotism until it is impossible to distinguish between the two.

"Even though Americans historically have done an admirable job of keeping the institutions of church and state separate, they have never separated the church and politics," said Robert D. Linder, professor of history at Kansas State

"Civil religionists often appropriate God for national ends and purposes"

University. "The concerns of the church and the concerns of politics, historically speaking, have always overlapped in this country," he said.

He cautioned, however, that "from the point of view of the church and politics, the main danger of civil religion in America today is that it identifies God with the national destiny and, in essence, reduces the universal God of the Bible to the tribal God of a particular nation.

"Civil religionists often appropriate God for national ends and purposes and increasingly in recent times they have not asked God to

judge the nation, but to bless its agenda."

Linder, a member of College Heights Baptist Church in Manhattan, Kansas, and former two-term city mayor, addressed the 250 registrants at the citizenship seminar on the dangers of an increasingly stronger presidential civil religion and traced the history of politics and the church.

Linder cited three doctrinal principles followed by New Testament Christians in relating to social and political issues which he said were valid for any discussion of the church and politics today.

"First, there is the early Christian teaching that every human being has intrinsic worth because of the incarnation. The incarnation itself should speak to the Christian political conscience concerning such issues as pornography, poverty, racism, and appalling prison conditions, for all these things represent a process of dehumanization that is contrary to the value that God has placed on all human beings.

"Second, is the view that human life is sacred. I am absolutely convinced that this was one of the two or three commonly held social beliefs of the early Christians," Linder said. "It was applied to almost every area of existence where human life was at risk: warfare, abortion, and capital punishment.

"The shedding of blood was singled out as one of the most grievous sins of the early church. The believers of those early centuries stood firmly against

abortion and capital punishment as contrary to the order of God's creation. As far as I can determine, the early Christian prohibition of killing was absolute.

"Third, is the view that believers should champion the poor, the needy and the oppressed..., or what today would be called 'human rights.'"

Linder told seminar participants it was proper for Christians and individual congregations to take a stand on political questions. "The church seems to be the only institution in Western society today with any kind of absolute values to serve as the basis for social and political reform in a world which desperately needs such reform," he contended.

"A world gone mad with killing

"The church seems to be the only institution in Western society today with any kind of absolute values to serve as the basis for social and political reform..."

and violence surely needs to hear a word from people who are different, who claim to be 'new creatures in Christ.'"

In challenging churches and Christians to political involvement, Linder also outlined limitations for Christian groups or churches.

"It is not wise for the church to participate in partisan politics," he warned. "Identification with one political party or the creation of a Christian Party automatically alienates large segments of humanity which should not be given the impression that any particular party is God's anointed or that the policies of any particular party are God's policies.

"On the other hand, I know of no reason why individual Christians in a

"Nearly all of the major problems facing the world today have both a political and spiritual dimension..."

democratic society should not belong to and participate in a political party. Not only do individual believers have that right as citizens of their respective countries, but like most human institutions, the party most likely can benefit from a Christian presence in its ranks."

Linder said the church should shun excessive political involvement because "this can dilute its religious or spiritual mission and turn it into just another political action committee or party.

"The first business of the church has always been evangelism--winning people to Jesus Christ; however, the Gospel has certain political and social implications which cannot be ignored.

"Nearly all of the major problems facing the world today have both a political and spiritual dimension: war and peace, freedom and tyranny, terrorism and violence, racial and sexual prejudice, abortion and the right to life, world hunger and poverty, economic justice, the use

and misuse of nuclear power, environmental questions--they all illustrate the link between spiritual and political issues.

"Unresolved over a long enough period of time, any of these issues can bring a great civilization to destruction."

Linder said the church should never participate in the political process for the sake of power and/or privilege and should avoid being co-opted by civil religion.

"Since Christianity is an international religion which finds its most profound expression in personal faith, it would appear to be incompatible with civil religion. Therefore, Christians should beware of falling for the civil religion blandishments of high officials and reserve the right and the capacity to critique any government or ruling party.

"The church should avoid being used by the state for the state's own ends by participating in civil religion."

Linder cited a growing connection between religion and the presidency, which he said has intensified since the Eisenhower administration. Linder cautioned about the dangers of presidents who assume priestly roles as leaders of civil religion.

"It was Ronald Reagan who brought a new, highly charged religio-political climate to the White House," he contended. "Backed

with fervor and passion by many of the most devout people in the country, he responded by adopting a religiously conservative social agenda for his administration. In so doing he became the darling of the New Religious Right, and developed an intimate relationship with them.

"Part of the intimacy was generated by the coincidence of the political goals of the New Religious Right and those of the New Political Right, but a great portion of it also was based on the perception that

"Keep in mind that the highest loyalty of a Christian believer is to Jesus Christ, not to any political personality, or political office, or political ideology, or political entity."

Reagan was one of them 'spiritually, politically and socially,'" Linder said.

"This in turn, was largely because the religious rightists believed that the President spoke their language, and he did. Still, that language, that common meeting ground of the adherents of the religious right and the political right, has essentially been the language of civil religion, not Christianity. In fact, it can be argued that Reagan has been the most astute practitioner of civil religion to occupy the White House in the twentieth century."

Linder pointed out that the civil religion language of any president, sincerely uttered though it may be, is not the same as, nor is it meant to be, the language of the church and of Jesus Christ. "Keep in mind that the highest loyalty of a Christian believer is to Jesus Christ, not to any political personality, or political office, or political ideology, or political entity." ■

Fields is an associate director of the Christian Life Commission and editor of LIGHT.

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LIGHT FROM THE CAPITAL

TURNING BACK THE NUCLEAR CLOCK

By Larry Braidfoot

For some years, the threat of nuclear war has been portrayed by the image of a clock, which set humanity's time to nuclear destruction at four minutes to midnight. This proximity to midnight indicated the seriousness and the nearness of the threat of nuclear war in humanity's future.

Now the hands on the clock have been turned back. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty negotiated by Reagan and Gorbachev has been widely hailed as an important step in the direction of lessening the prospect of nuclear war. The treaty is not without its critics, and some of those who support it do so with reservations.

What does the INF Treaty do? If ratified, it will, for the first time in arms negotiations, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons. Missiles with ranges from 300 to 3,400 miles would be dismantled. The United States would dismantle 867 missiles and the Soviet Union 1,836 missiles. It would reduce by almost 5 percent the nuclear arsenals of both superpowers.

The geographic region directly affected is Europe. Intermediate-range NATO aligned missiles located in Western Europe and the Warsaw Pact missiles located in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union have been a major source of heightened concern in Europe. Removal of these missiles takes away the tension of these missiles and the ICBM missiles targeted at Europe. These intermediate-range missiles are considered to be prime prospects for "first-strike" or "quick retaliation." Europe will not be "uncovered" by nuclear missiles. It

will be covered only by the same kinds of missiles that will reach the rest of the world.

Another new development is agreement upon a process of on-site verification. This process may be the most important development in the treaty. For years, concern has been expressed by many about the capability of verifying any treaty. This treaty provides a number of components to a verification process. (1) Both superpowers will have a specified number of personnel located in the other superpower's territory for a period of 13 years. (2) On-site inspection will be conducted at INF sites in allied countries. (3) Each side can conduct up to 20 "short-notice challenge inspections" during the first three years of the treaty. (4) Each side can conduct up to 15 "short-notice challenge inspections" over the next five years and up to 10 over the subsequent five years of the treaty. This breakthrough related to on-site verification could have enormous ramifications for the viability of future negotiations such as the START talks.

The United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency has indicated to the Senate and to the President that the United States intelligence community can effectively verify the treaty. This on-site verification would be in addition to the enormous data which can be secured through other forms of verification by satellite detection and seismic activity.

The Soviet Union has already begun withdrawing intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Eastern Europe. This action comes at a time when Soviet observers are noting that the Soviet Union appears to have shifted its political doctrine to

the position that nuclear war is not inevitable. Gorbachev appears willing to focus on defensive rather than offensive military postures. With the Soviet economy in continued trauma, Gorbachev is keenly aware that military spending is a "guns or butter" issue.

The treaty has provoked considerable debate, as it should. Debate has revolved principally around three issues: the inclusion of "futuristic" weapons, the degree to which treaty interpretation is binding and the balance of conventional forces.

Behind the debate on futuristic weapons and treaty interpretation is a simmering debate about President Reagan's desire to "reinterpret" the 1972 ABM treaty. The argument has revolved around whether or not a future administration can offer an interpretation of the treaty which differs from the position set forth by the administration in urging ratification. The concern over "futuristic" weapons is an attempt to preclude the kind of debate which has developed about a treaty covering only those weapons in existence at the time of the treaty.

It is interesting that the merits of the treaty are not the focus of debate. Instead, the debate has used the INF treaty as an occasion to debate national policies regarding military spending and treaty meaning and compliance.

The verification issue is one which has been of concern to Southern Baptists in debates about peace and arms limitation. Resolutions from Southern Baptist Conventions in 1982 and 1983 supported "mutually verifiable disarmament" and "fully mutually verifiable" agreements. These concerns about verification would seem to be met by this treaty.

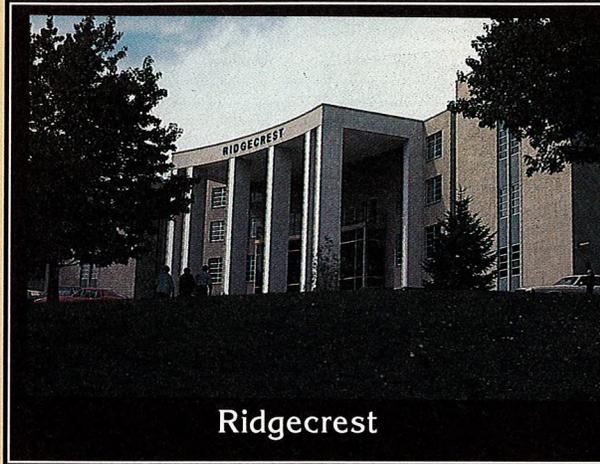
The treaty appears headed for overwhelming ratification. Expressions of support or opposition should be expressed to your individual Senator. ■

Braidfoot directs Christian citizenship concerns for the Christian Life Commission.

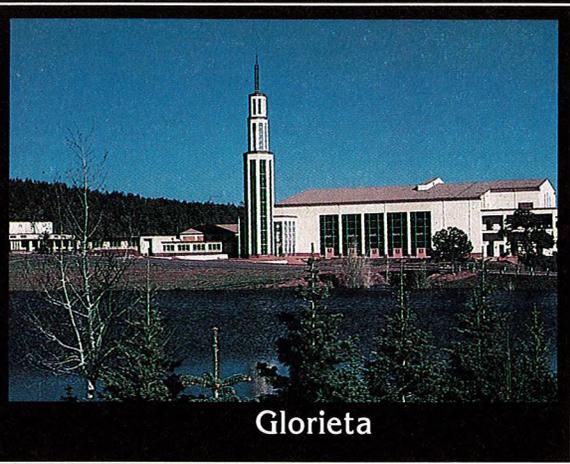
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The following resources available from the Christian Life Commission are appropriate for use in support of Christian Citizenship Sunday or an awareness/action emphasis in the local church.

Quan.	Resource	Price	Total
	Christian Citizenship Awareness/Action Guide --a five-session awareness/action emphasis for groups who want to know more about Christian citizenship. Appropriate for adults and youth. This guide is coordinated with the four pamphlets below.	\$1.50 ea.	
	Christian Citizenship Pamphlet Series --four pamphlets which coordinate with chapters in the Christian Citizenship Awareness/Action Guide above.		
	. Christians and Politics	.20 ea.	
	. How Christians Can Be Involved in Politics	.20 ea.	
	. The Christian Hope for Government	.20 ea.	
	. Patriotism and Civil Religion	.20 ea.	
	The Bible Speaks on Christian Citizenship --this pamphlet explains what the Bible has to say about Christian citizenship.	10/1.50	
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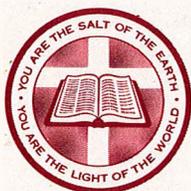
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