

Light

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

JULY-AUGUST, 1994

Living in a pagan culture

A reality Southern Baptists, other evangelicals, can no longer ignore

By Doug LeBlanc

Do Southern Baptists and other American evangelicals live in a post-Christian era? Consider this:

- A startling number of Americans who consider themselves Christians are unable to say who preached the Sermon on the Mount.
- Studies show that evangelicals are almost as likely as their neighbors to divorce, or to experience or practice child abuse.

• With their secular neighbors, evangelicals lap up the evolution-as-fact premises of *Jurassic Park*, the sexual exploitation of MTV, and the dumbed-down factoids of *USA Today*.

A Christian needn't believe that America was ever the New Israel to recognize that Americans are less informed by Christian thinking in 1994 than they were a few decades ago.

Several evangelical culture-watchers agree that Americans' knowledge of Christianity is deteriorating. Yet the decay has been so slow and steady that sometimes it has gone unnoticed.

Demographer George Barna uses such measures as what people know about Christian values, how they develop values, and how they make moral and ethical decisions.

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Church voter registration drives increase among Southern Baptists

By Louis A. Moore

With a hostile secular culture closing in all around, Christians are rallying at the ballot box as an effective way to turn the tide and impact society for good.

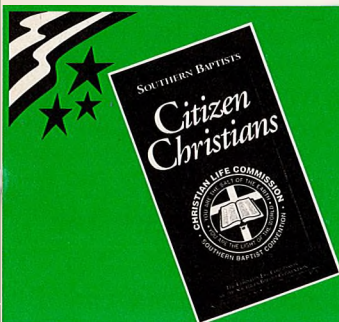
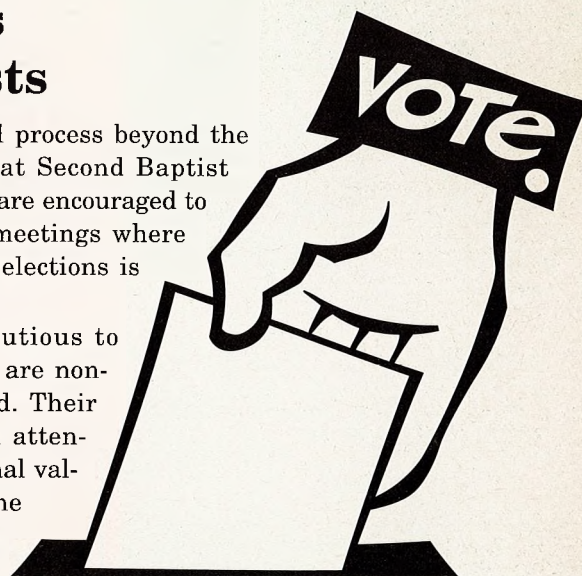
Informed, committed voters are finding they can make a difference in elections and referendums.

Voter registration campaigns are becoming commonplace in a growing number of Southern Baptist churches today. They frequently signal the beginning of a wider effort to educate members about

how to impact the electoral process beyond the ballot box. For instance, at Second Baptist Church, Houston, members are encouraged to vote then attend precinct meetings where the real business of Texas elections is often conducted.

Church leaders are cautious to point out that their efforts are non-partisan and issue-oriented. Their efforts are designed to call attention to the need for traditional values and not to refashion the culture in the image of the church.

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LIGHT is printed
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LIGHT, a Christian ethics, public policy and religious liberty publication for pastors, teachers, state and national denominational workers, and other persons with special interest in applied Christianity, is published six times a year by the Christian Life Commission. *LIGHT* is sent free to individuals who request it. Voluntary subscriptions, for persons who wish to help defray costs of printing and mailing and to help underwrite a growing mailing list, are \$5 annually (6 issues). Checks should be made payable to *LIGHT*. Your canceled check will serve as your tax-deductible receipt.

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Baptist Convention**

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PERSPECTIVE

Christian Bashing

By Richard D. Land



In recent weeks hysterical attacks have been leveled against conservative Christians who have dared to exercise their rights as American citizens to bring their faith convictions into the political process. Examples abound:

- The Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) recently published book, *The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America*, provides an excellent example of the very intolerance which it purports to warn against. In its biased attack, the ADL accuses the "religious right" of bringing "a rhetoric of fear, suspicion and even hatred" to political discourse.

- One columnist recently wrote that if Christian religious leaders did not keep their "holy yaps" shut about moral-political issues, they should lose their tax-exempt status.

- The chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Rep. Vic Fazio, D-Calif., attacked conservative Christians as the "fire-breathing Christian radical right."

- The ever-offensive Surgeon General, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, attacked the "un-Christian religious right" for opposing her federally funded "safe sex" programs and added that "We've got to be strong to take on those people who are selling our children out in the name of religion." This is the same Dr. Elders who attacked Roman Catholics who dared to question her pro-abortion views as "very religious non-Christians." Yet Dr. Elders, as recently as last January, expressed her opposition to capital punishment with these words: "As a Christian, as an individual, as a doctor, I am absolutely opposed to the death penalty" (*New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1994). It appears that it is perfectly acceptable for Dr. Elders to defend her views as "Christian," but if you disagree with her, then you are "un-Christian" or "non-Christian." I ask you, who is intolerant of whom?

What have conservative Christians done to arouse all this anger? It seems to me that conservative Christians are deeply concerned about the severe moral decline evident everywhere in our culture. Few Americans alive 30 years ago could have imagined the America of today: where every 26 seconds a child is born out of wedlock, where almost 40% of American children live in homes without biological fathers present, and where children born to unwed mothers are six times more likely to be poor as adults.

The last 30 years have revealed the human cost of the "anything-goes" moral relativism of the cultural and religious left. Ted Koppel's comments are apt: "What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions.... They are commandments. Are, not were. The sheer brilliance of the Ten Commandments is that they codify, in a handful of words, acceptable human behavior. Not just for then, or now, but for all time."

Recently a reporter asked, "What would you have in America if you could have what you want?" I answered, "An America like the 1950s without the sexism and the racism." That was an America where most people accepted the "Ten Commandments," not the "Ten Suggestions," even when they violated them with some regularity. It wasn't a perfect country, but the fruit of the Ten Commandments was, and is, superior in every way to the chaos and havoc wrought by the Ten Suggestions world view.

If the moral absolutes of the Ten Commandments are ever again to hold sway in our society, there must be revival in our hearts, in our homes and in our churches. Our salvation has never been, and will never be, in politics, but in spiritual renewal in Christ. But national renewal must build on that spiritual base a solid structure of involvement with society. And by the way, Christians should be far less eager to endorse candidates, and far more concerned whether or not candidates *endorse them* and their involvement in the process.

Heimbach: Public square not off limits

By Dwayne Hastings

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics professor Daniel Heimbach believes Christians are obligated to bring their values to bear in the public arena.

"We need to be concerned about what is happening in society because God is concerned about it," Heimbach said. "We should be motivated to participate and seek to influence the public square, not only because we believe God to be the moral ruler, but because we have a participatory form of government.

"Our American system requires that we bring our Christian value judgments to bear on public policy issues," he said.

Heimbach believes every moral framework or perspective is religious. "There is no religiously neutral point of view or value judgment. Every value system is based on or oriented by some faith commitment. Some are more explicit than others."

Heimbach, who reviewed the ethics curriculum at the U.S. Naval Academy during his stint as deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for manpower in the Bush administration, said the promotion of moral character is an area "in which the schools have not been doing a very good job."

He cited as an example Values Clarification, a program introduced in public schools to help students objectively and scientifically think through ethical issues but which generally avoided calling any behavior right or wrong.

He said that experiment failed in public schools, creating "a real vacuum as it regards principles of morality.

"Teachers were not advocates for one thing over another. Children were led to believe there is 'no real right or wrong.' The message was 'anything goes.' Now, just about everybody—secular, Christian, whomever—realizes that (program) just did not work, and schools are



Southeastern Seminary ethics professor Daniel Heimbach believes Christians must exert their influence in the public arena.

getting more and more undisciplined."

His own example of serving on his local school district's Character Education Task Force models how Christians can be involved in the public arena, he said.

The task force is attempting to identify a list of virtues or "inner qualities that incline the individual to choose right over wrong," that will find broad support throughout the community and will be the basis of a curriculum in the county's classrooms.

Heimbach said the task force sees itself augmenting, not replacing, parental responsibility. The group is seeking parental and community input.

The task force has identified eight character traits it believes will promote character development in young people: courage, good judgment (prudence), integrity, kindness, perseverance, respect, responsibility and self-discipline.

It is also drawing from a variety of religious traditions. "There are a number of character traits...that are not unique to Christianity or Hinduism or Judaism or humanism, but rather are shared broadly.

"We don't want the school system to be a vehicle to promote a moral system or framework that is unique to one religious viewpoint and not shared by others; that is the province of the church and the family. It is the community of which you are a part that is saying, 'This is the kind of person we want you to be,'" Heimbach said.

Reaching an agreement on these, however, has sometimes stirred debate. The group, for instance, debated and declined to include tolerance as a virtue because tolerance has been used as a lever to avoid making moral judgments about certain controversial types of behavior, he said.

"From a Christian world view, certain kinds of sexual behavior are clearly wrong, and yet there are those from a very permissive humanist point of view who are saying that the behavior should be accepted, because we should be tolerant. Tolerance by itself is not a virtue. It's a character trait, but it can just as well be a vice as a virtue," he said.

Heimbach said the work of the Wake County task force is "entirely original" in its process although a few other school systems across the country are exploring ways to introduce virtues back into the schools.

He said Wake County "is in a leadership role in this program. We wanted to do something that would be an example to everybody else, and in fact that is what is happening." The Character Education Task Force's work in designing a curriculum with character traits and standards of right and wrong has prompted a "tremendous response," Heimbach said. "This effort in Wake County is pretty much ahead of the game for the country."

Is the U.S.A. now a post-Christian culture?

(Continued from Page 1)

"Almost every measure that we have suggests that when people are making their decisions, God's point of view or the Bible's principles are not uppermost in their minds." Barna says. "Even those people who claim to be Christian...exhibit a kind of confusion over how to make good decisions."

George G. Hunter III, dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, cites sobering data from pollster George Gallup Jr., an evangelical Episcopalian.

Since 1968, Gallup's organization has asked a random sampling of adult Americans if they have any religious training in their background.

"In 1968, 9 percent said no. In 1978, 17 percent said no. In 1988, 25 percent said no," says Hunter, author of *How to Reach Secular People*. If that trend continues, Gallup's findings in 1998 will show about one out of three Americans having no religious training in their background.

Hunter also points out that 49 percent of parents told Gallup in 1988 that their children are receiving no religious training.

"Just in terms of the cognitive preparation for making sense of Christian truth claims, more and more people lack that preparation," Hunter says. "When you add to that the fact that a lot of people who have some religious training in their background didn't get it, and it just didn't stick and they can't appropriate it now, we're talking about a majority of the American people."

Marvin Olasky, editor-at-large for *World* magazine and a journalism professor at the University of Texas, also senses a widening secularism in American culture.

"There's always been a battle within the intellectual elite. If you go back to the 18th century, there was certainly a battle there. You had strong Christians and you also had deists," Olasky says. "What's interesting now is that the battle

within the elite has spread through the country—not just on a high theological plane, but on a cultural plane as well. You used to have people broadly through the country who, whether they were Christians or not, at least had some understanding of what the Bible says. Now there are Texas kids I'm teaching who have had absolutely no exposure at all. It's novel to them.

Many...hesitate to use the phrase "post-Christian America," fearing that it reflects a romanticized notion of Christian prevalence in American culture.

Or, what exposure they've had has been so watered down that it's worse than nothing."

Os Guinness of The Trinity Forum observes many dimensions of this secularization. One is the secularization of consciousness. "I would say, although this is a sweeping generalization, that many evangelicals are almost atheists unaware, in the sense that their practicing world view has very little of a supernatural dimension."

No Golden Age

Many evangelical culture-watchers hesitate to use the phrase "post-Christian America," fearing that it reflects a romanticized notion of Christian prevalence in American culture.

"I don't think there ever was really a Christian nation per se," says John Whitehead of The Rutherford Institute, which defends the civil rights of pro-life activists, home-schooling parents, and Christians arrested for public evangelism.

Still, Whitehead says, "There's no doubt this is a culture that no longer even looks to Christianity for

an answer. At one time, when people had a question, they went to their pastor. That's no longer true. Now it's either a psychiatrist, a public schoolteacher, or a social worker."

In Europe, where most nations were officially Christian, the phrase "post-Christian" is more meaningful, Guinness believes. "Here it's confusing," he says. "On the one hand, most people were and still are Christians, but America never was officially an established Christian nation. I think 'post-Christian' is rather unhelpful over here."

But Guinness believes two significant changes have taken place in America, including "the growth of secularity in American life—the pressing of religion back to the margins—and the pluralization of American life, with the enormous expansion of all the world's religions."

Hunter recalls hearing a radio report that 80 percent of American people still consider themselves Christians, yet 49 percent did not know that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

"What we're talking about is an astonishing and growing number of people I call 'agnostics.' They're not agnostics ('I don't know if I believe in your God or not'), but ignostics ('I don't know what you're talking about')," Hunter says.

What that means, Hunter believes, is that America is a growing mission field. "And yet most of our churches function as though all of this hasn't happened, and we're still churches in an established Christian country, where ministry is mainly a chaplaincy, taking care of people who are already Christians."

Tracing the Changes

Evangelical scholars cite a number of reasons for the increasing sense of secularization—including popular culture, a never-ending array of sophisticated technology, and a greater interest in non-Christian beliefs.

(Continued on Page 7)

By Louis A. Moore

Even as the threat of world communism recedes from memory and once-hostile nations reduce the size of their armed forces and the volume of their armaments, peace remains an elusive goal for many people today.

While the un-peace of war stalks places such as the former Yugoslav republics, the real lack of peace is seen today in lives tarnished by abuse and violence in their own homes and neighborhoods. Communities large and small are gripped by news accounts of family violence in which children kill parents and parents kill children and of scenes in which former co-workers take out their hatred for their former employers with guns aimed at anybody in sight.

Driving this abuse and violence are the "secret" sins of society that fuel the reservoirs of hate and despair which invade the homes of the rich and poor alike. Some statistics bear this out: 18 million alcoholics, including 4.5 million teenagers, live in the U.S. alone, affecting 76 million family members; one in four American girls and one in eight boys are sexually abused by age 18; incest reportedly touches one in five Americans.

Sadly, Christians are not immune to the spin-off from the breakdown of families and the deterioration of ethical standards in society in general. The consequences of divorce, AIDS, sexual abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse, mental illness, and all the other plagues on humankind have left deep scars on many Christians today. Some estimates say as many as 80 percent of all SBC pastors today grew up in homes that would be classified by even Christian psychologists as dysfunctional. Many continue to bear the scars of such difficulties as parental alcoholism, divorce, workaholicism, sexual abuse and verbal or physical abuse.

The situation has spawned a quest for peace in the hearts of millions upon millions of people.

The apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:14 reminds us that the peace we so

'He is our peace'

(Ephesians 2:14)



**Observe Day of Prayer for World Peace
August 7, 1994**

desperately seek is found in Christ. "For He is our peace," Paul said. The "He" refers to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. In the context, Paul was speaking about how the shedding of Christ's blood has broken down the walls that separate Jews and Gentiles. Through Christ, the enmity that destroys peace is itself eradicated, reconciling Jew and Gentile through the Cross.

In the wider context, if we allow Him to do so, Christ is able to heal the scars in our hearts caused by a

world that still lives in enmity with God. No matter what disquiets the heart, Christ truly is our Peace in every way. "And [He] came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father," said the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:17-18.

Louis A. Moore is the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of media and product development.

Churches are encouraging voter registration

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To help churches conduct these voter registration campaigns, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has produced the booklet *Citizen Christian Awareness Campaign: A Manual for Prayer and Action*. It is available for \$1. (Ordering information is on Page 12.)

The first chapter of the booklet begins with these words:

"The increasing secularization of our culture makes it imperative that citizen Christians exert their influence on American public life. Increasingly, government is used to support values which are hostile to some Christian beliefs.

"We Christians too often stay out of American public life, rather than gratefully participating in representative self-government. We have the same civic rights as all other citizens and every reason in this increasingly secular age to claim and practice them. Churches are spiritual bodies, but they must exist and carry out their mission within a civil state governed by civil laws which can either help or hinder their work. Christians have every right to use the powers of their earthly citizenship to keep churches free to fulfill their divine mandate."

Second Baptist-Houston and Bellevue Baptist in Memphis are examples of Southern Baptist churches which have moved rapidly in recent years into this area of Christian witness.

Brian Gaston, one of the coordinators of the Second Baptist effort, says, "to make a difference, we've got to have more and more Christians involved in the political process. Our first goal is to help people become motivated, but of most importance is to educate them on the way the political process works and on the issues."

Second Baptist's Civic Awareness Program is threefold.

One aspect is the Nehemiah Project, which gets under way about three months prior to primary elections every two years in Texas.

"Our purpose in this project is to get a lot of our people participating in the election and in the precinct conventions," says Gaston. "We do not tell people what party to vote for or what candidate to vote for. We are very careful not to endorse a

"We believe if people look at the issues with open hearts and open ears, they will come to the right conclusion."

party or a candidate. This is purely and simply a Christian participation program."

The second aspect is the church's voter registration program. About two months prior to every election voter registration tables are set up at the church to make it as convenient as possible for people attending services to register to vote.

The third aspect, called the "Christian alert program," educates people about issues, such as outcome-based education, crime, taxation and homosexuality, that concern citizens today.

"We do not want to turn into little demagogues, telling everybody what to do or what to believe," says Gaston. "We believe if people look at the issues with open hearts and open ears, they will come to the right conclusion."

Dale Ingram, who spearheads the voter registration campaign at Bellevue Baptist, said, "You'd be

surprised at the number of people who have been registered to vote (through the church's program). There were a lot of people who either had just moved into the area or who for one reason or another hadn't registered to vote."

He estimates Bellevue's campaign has registered 300 persons a year to vote.

The church's new Moral Concerns Committee is attempting to keep the congregation informed about pertinent issues, he says. "We've talked about the proposed EEOC guidelines, school registration and school-based clinics and issues like that. We try to keep up with all the things going on in the community."

Ingram says he believes voter registration and issue-education committee are "significant enough that all the churches ought to do it."

Michael K. Whitehead, the CLC's general counsel, says voter registration campaigns are absolutely legal and do not violate the First Amendment's protection of separation of church and state.

"Vote Christian! It is your right. It is your responsibility," he says.

He suggests that churches conduct a "nonpartisan voter registration survey" to determine how many eligible voters in the congregation have not registered to vote.

"Have a voter registration table in your church lobby," he says. "Call your county registrar to find out how your county does voter registration. If your church has members from several counties, call each one. Some states will deputize and train a church member to handle the table. Other states will schedule a visiting voter registrar to come to your church on one or more dates (e.g. Sunday mornings or Wednesday nights). Ask about the deadline date before which citizens must register to vote in the next election."

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"The media and the world of art, music, the entertainment, and the instruments of technology have molded us to a point where reality is completely redefined," says evangelist Ravi Zacharias. "What virtual reality will bring is, in effect, already here without the head gear. We already create our virtual realities and do not recognize the fallout of it all. I think technology and the world of the arts have become the molding instruments of our consciousness today. In that sense, we are in a post-Christian era, because truth is relegated to subjectivity."

"Most Americans, for most of American life, have understood themselves and the world from their Christian perspective," Guinness says. "But today, the key group that doesn't is the leadership group. Between 1959 and 1969 there was an enormous expansion of secularism from 2 percent to 10 or 11 percent. That is disproportionately strong in the elites. The elites of America today, the gate-keeping elites, are largely tone-deaf to religion...which is largely a result of ignorance."

Worse, Guinness says, evangelicals have exerted little influence as secularism has taken a greater hold in American culture.

"For 150 years, evangelicals have been marked by a sinful anti-intellectualism. For many decades in the 150 years we didn't pay for it, but now we're living in the Information Era, and with the elites disproportionately secularist, the tragic result is a literal education gap," says Guinness. "Before 1960, we had more-educated believers and less-educated believers—there was no education gap. Since the '60s, to be more educated is to be less religious, and to be less educated is to be more religious."

Olasky traces secularization to decaying standards in journalism, churches, and schools.

"Journalists not only set agendas, they 'certify,'" Olasky says. "They certify people as big shots or nobodies. A lot of people yearn for that certification. For example, when you're doing things to help

Christians' influence waning

homeless individuals, you can do it in a way that will allow you to receive praise from local journalists, or you can do it in a way that will be ignored."

As for churches, Olasky believes there's "a lot of very weak evangelical preaching going on," and as a result, many church members who affirm certain beliefs on Sunday do not carry those beliefs into their everyday lives. "Thus, the tendency is to adjust beliefs to practice over a long period of time," Olasky says.

"Certainly the schools are disaster areas. In the past, the problem was noneducation. If you could get people to schools, then they would learn how to read and they would be able to read the Bible and *McGuffey's Readers*, which had good moral precepts. They were trying to go from noneducation to literacy. Now we're going from education to mis-education."

Like Olasky, Whitehead believes secularization has spread from intellectual elites into the general culture.

"To really understand this, you have to go back into the 1800s, with the onslaught of Freudianism, which was readily accepted in America, and the theory of evolution, which had a great impact and was adopted into every major institution. Evolution is accepted as a fact—look at the biggest movie of all time now, *Jurassic Park*.

"Christians have failed for years," Whitehead says, "When the real signals were being blasted throughout culture, Christians were not involved. They had stopped being the leading thinkers. Christianity went into an enclave for a while, withdrew, and became very pietistic. It wasn't until the 1970s, after *Roe vs. Wade*, that Christians came back and said we can be involved in social concerns. But there was about a 100-year lapse. Those who either thought Christianity was irrelevant, or were hostile to it, stepped into this vacuum, and effected change."

The same evangelicals who express concern about secular

trends believe that Christians can make a difference—in part by learning from past mistakes.

Our first priority should be examining our own lifestyles, Zacharias says. We need to ask ourselves, "Am I yielding to the allurements around—materially, sensually, artistically? Have I kept integrity within my own heart?" he says.

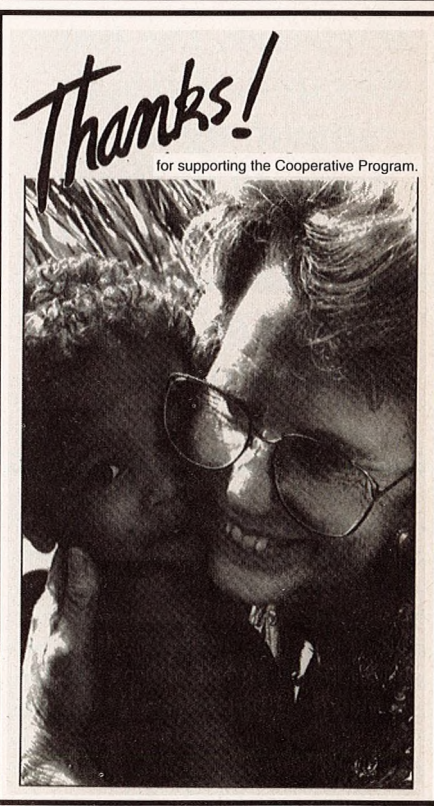
"We need to take our spiritual disciplines of reading and reflecting seriously. An expenditure of words without an income of ideas leads to conceptual bankruptcy."

Zacharias has led several forums at secular universities, including Harvard, and has found great spiritual hunger among students.

"If our experience of the last five years is any indication of the demand out there to deal with the intellectual credibility of Christianity, then we have not even begun to scratch the surface. The demands are out there, and people await that kind of response from the church."

Guinness believes secularism

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By Douglas Bandow

One doesn't have to be a genius to realize that the nation's moral climate is not good. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Christians see government as a means to make things right.

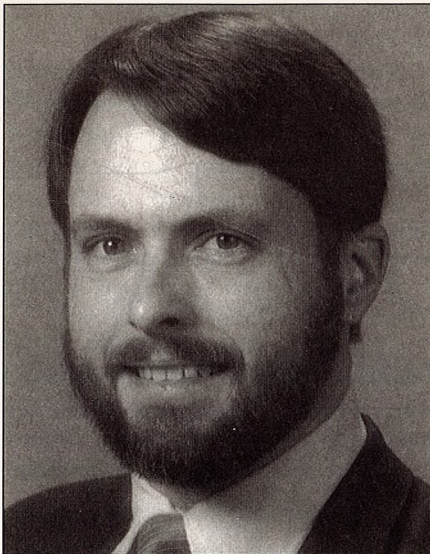
Nowhere is that more evident than in drug policy—where the state bans selected substances (marijuana, say, but not cigarettes) as well as otherwise innocent items associated with drug use (such as needles, used most commonly by heroin addicts). Alas, the experiment in government regulation, just like that of alcohol prohibition earlier this century, has proved to be an expensive failure. A decade's worth of ever more draconian enforcement efforts has not preserved America's Judeo-Christian ethos; to the contrary, moral breakdown seems to have accelerated even as the government was filling the nation's prisons, more than doubling the number of inmates during the 1980s.

Nor has this willingness to lock up one's neighbors for moral offenses primarily *against themselves*

***Moreover, the law
has done little to
stop drug use.
Some 80 million
Americans over the
age of 12 have tried
at least one illicit
substance.***

rather than others (just like alcohol abuse and cigarette smoking) made people more virtuous. For one thing, one must have free choice to act morally; coerced action is not virtuous. Moreover, the law has done little to stop drug use. Some 80 million Americans over the age of 12 have tried at least one illicit substance. One-tenth of the popula-

Clean needles should be distributed to illegal drug users



Douglas Bandow

tion uses drugs at least once a year. We obviously face a frightening epidemic of moral vacuousness and spiritual emptiness, but one that it should be painfully obvious by now cannot be met by government. Only the church has the real answer.

While drug prohibition has not uplifted the nation morally, it has created enormous practical problems. Several thousand people, including scores of innocents, die annually in gang wars that occur because the drug market is criminal—just like during Prohibition earlier this century. The legal ban inflates drug prices, causing an increase in property crime as addicts steal to finance their habits. Drugs themselves are more dangerous, since users have neither assurance as to what they are buying nor legal recourse against sellers for any resulting harm.

Moreover, drug prohibition has greatly spurred the spread of AIDS in America. Roughly one-fourth of AIDS cases have resulted, directly or indirectly, from intravenous (IV) drug use and account for the great majority of all heterosexuals testing HIV positive. Another six percent of those with AIDS were both homosexuals and IV drug users. Half of

HIV-infected heterosexuals contracted the virus through sexual contact with IV drug users. *Two thirds of perinatal AIDS cases involve children of IV drug users or women who have had sex with IV drug users.* All told, IV drug users constitute the fastest-growing category of people with AIDS.

The problem is two-fold. Social outcasts taking illicit substances are less likely to be influenced by their neighbors and co-workers to engage in more responsible behavior. Moreover, addicts tend to share needles, which cannot be legally obtained in most states. It might seem tempting to say that IV drug users have brought the disease on themselves. Tempting, but not a good witness to Christ's love. Moreover, thousands of addicts' wives and children are also suffering. And the cost to the rest of us of this epidemic is very high.

It is time to follow a different course. Whatever larger policy the government follows toward drug use—and I believe we should de-escalate the drug war—it is time to allow addicts to acquire clean needles. This would not represent official approval of drug use, since the needles could be distributed privately. Anyway, it should be evident by now that addicts don't let government disapproval discourage them from using drugs. Giving them access to clean needles would at least reduce the ancillary harm to them and many others, including children.

Indeed, we should look to Great Britain and the Netherlands, where HIV infection rates are dramatically lower, as models. Both allow some legal drug use—under the supervision of doctors in Great Britain. As a result, the Netherlands is thought to have the lowest proportion of AIDS patients who are IV drug users (three percent) in Europe, while in Britain's Liverpool, which

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By Michael M. Gimbel

In addition to being the Director of Substance Abuse for Baltimore County in Maryland, for the past 14 years, I am also a recovering drug addict. I injected heroin for several years. While I may not know all details about the government-sponsored surveys about the success of needle-exchange programs, I have worked for government long enough to know that you can make a study say anything you want—it's done all the time. I choose to look at the drug problem from the point of view of the reality of what drug addiction is and the addicts who so desperately need our help.

In my view and my personal experience, the availability of clean needles for addicts is not our primary problem—trying to get addicts off of the illicit drugs is our greatest challenge and should be our ultimate goal.

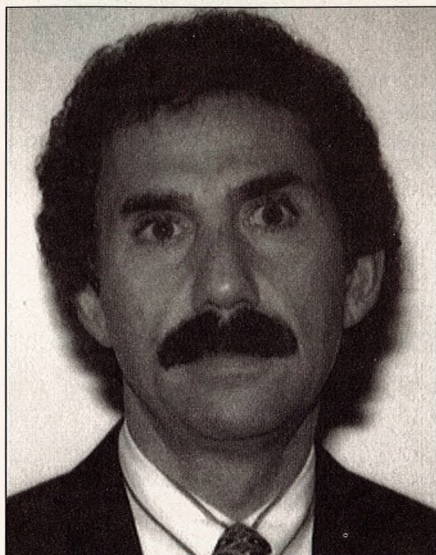
It is wrong to attempt to erase one crisis by reinforcing another. It is wrong to try to save drug abusers from AIDS by perpetuating their pain and suffering from addiction.

...the availability of clean needles for addicts is not our primary problem—trying to get addicts off of the illicit drugs is our greatest challenge.

It will ultimately hurt more people than it will help.

The one thing I know the most about in this world is how addicts think. Drug addicts are by the nature of their disease irresponsible and self-destructive, and it is very difficult to change their behavior without long-term treatment. Needle-exchange programs only rein-

Clean needles should not be distributed to illegal drug users



Michael M. Gimbel

force that addictive behavior and never address the root cause of addiction. This means that in a very short period of time, the addict will drop out of the program and continue his irresponsible behavior both by sharing needles and having unsafe sex. The needle-exchange program does nothing to address the problem of addicts having unprotected sex. The often-quoted New Haven, Conn., needle-exchange program reports less than one-third of the addicts claim they had protected sex.

The needle-exchange program is truly a case of an intellectual pipe dream—it may look good on paper but in reality it never addresses the root cause of AIDS or drug addiction.

Finally, needle exchange—as does the discussion of the legalization of drugs—sends a mixed message to not only the addicts involved but to the young people we are trying to reach. During the 1980s, our society sent a very clear no-use message about drugs to our youth and general population. As a result, school-age drug use dropped each year during the 1980s. Since the mayor of Baltimore and other prominent intellectuals began the

debate about legalization, we have seen an increase for the last two years in our schools. I believe it is because we are now sending our youth a mixed message, and our young people are taking full advantage of it.

People often ask, "even if needle exchange doesn't work very well, what's wrong with trying it?" Well, disregarding "morality" and the peculiar position in which government is placed by its support for needle programs (and facilitation of drug use), there is a more profound implication to clean-needle policies. Demand reduction is now accepted as the primary means of bringing drug abuse under control. Demand reduction involves not only prevention but treatment—and increasingly the treatment of heavily drug-involved, deeply disordered abusers.

Drug abusers will only come into treatment in large numbers if they are subjected to a significant amount of pressure. What determines the degree of pressure to which they are exposed is public attitudes about drug use. Public tolerance for drug use is contrary to demand reduction. Thus, to the degree that needle exchange fosters ambivalence about drug use and renders society less able to articulate a clear and consistent demand that drug abusers stop using drugs (and accept the treatment they need in order to do so), it is a cost rather than a benefit to society.

We do have a serious problem of AIDS and hard-core drug addiction in our cities, counties, states and nation. We need to target this high-risk population with education and long-term treatment on demand so that we can get to the root cause of these problems. If we keep trying to "fire-fight" our way out of this problem, in a year or two it will remain the killer that it is today, and we will have lost another generation to drugs. Needle-exchange programs

(Continued on Page 10)

Land preaches religious freedom in Romania

By Norman Miller

Bucharest, Romania—CLC Executive Director Richard Land spoke at the "Religious Liberties Conference: A Free Gospel in a Free State" May 18-20 here.

The Christian Life Commission, Baptist Sunday School Board, SBC Executive Committee and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary jointly sponsored the conference, which drew nearly 100 participants, consisting of about 70 Romanian Baptist pastors as well as several Romanian government officials. Invited officials of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Romania did not attend.

Among the lectures by Southern Baptist leaders, Land presented, "Baptists and Religious Liberty: Past, Present and Future." Land traced historic Baptist struggles for religious freedom along four points: (1) Religious liberty and church/state separation are not distinctly American, but are rather distinctly biblical; (2) Achieving religious freedom is a long and arduous task; (3) Once achieved, religious liberty is never secure; and, (4) Christians in America stand in "solidarity" with Romanians in their



struggles against religious oppression.

Other Southern Baptist leaders who presented papers were Paige and Dorothy Patterson, Daniel Heimbach and conference organizer, Phil Roberts, all of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C. Mark Coppenger, vice president of convention relations, Nashville, Tenn., and Foreign Mission Board European Area director John Floyd also lectured at the conference.

In an interview, Land noted the

universal and timeless struggle for religious freedom when he said, "The Christian struggle for religious liberty is as old as events in Acts chapter four, where Peter and John opted to obey God rather than men. In Baptist life, our heritage of religious freedom harks back to the Anabaptists, who, like our Romanian brothers and sisters, were persecuted at the hands of the church and state."

Land believes the conference made the "Romanian Baptists more aware of the struggle for religious freedom in America and how difficult their own struggles will be in attaining total religious freedom."

He said it is "the nature of government to gather power unto itself; if left unmonitored, government will usurp the people's rights."

"As the largest non-Catholic denomination, 24 million Baptists (in the U.S.) are praying for our Romanian brothers and sisters and are making our government aware of how important it is to Baptists in America that countries which desire good relations with the U.S. guarantee and protect the most fundamental of all human rights and freedoms: the freedom of worship and religious belief," Land said. "No single action would have a more negative impact on public opinion in America than for a nation to deny complete religious freedom to its people."

Referring to lectures given by Romanian participants in the conference, Land said, "It was truly moving and most humbling to hear evidenced in their lectures the fact that the Romanians had poured over translations of the U.S. 'Declaration of Independence,' and the 'Constitution of the United States' with its magnificent 'Bill of Rights' as well as hearing them cite Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. So many Americans take for granted the great heritage of religious and political freedom bequeathed to us by our forebears." Land then asked, "How many Americans have read these documents in the last year, or even in the last decade?"

Point

Clean needles should be distributed

(Continued from Page 8)

has a particularly progressive policy, the rate of HIV infection is about one-fiftieth of that in the U.S.

It is time to rethink the drug war—not to "surrender" to evil, but to better combat what is at root a spiritual rather than a legal problem. A good place to start would be

to allow drug users to buy needles. Then we could get on with the task of combatting the spiritual emptiness and other factors that give rise to drug abuse.

Douglas Bandow is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C.

Counterpoint

Clean needles should not be distributed

(Continued from Page 9)

give a mixed message when we need to be sending a very clear no-use message to all who are using drugs and to all who may be thinking

about it. Our future depends on it!

Michael M. Gimbel is director of the Office of Substance Abuse for Baltimore County, Maryland.

(Continued from Page 7)

should compel Christians toward a more authentic evangelism.

Many evangelistic techniques were developed during the '40s and '50s, when it was assumed that most Americans understood Christianity. "The increase of pluralism and the increase of secularization means we need to rediscover apologetics and become persuasive people again," Guinness says.

"It's not enough to say 'the Bible says' in our modern culture. It's not that modernity requires a new evangelism; it's that modernity requires the old evangelism that was in the Scriptures. What we've had in the last generation is not the real thing."

Barna expresses a concern for more effective techniques, "I'm absolutely convinced that, as we've been studying evangelism in the contemporary context, the old routines and approaches do not work. Communication styles are different today, attention spans are very different, assumptions about who Christ is and support of absolutes are very different. All of those things combined mean that we have to rethink—not the message, but the means and mechanisms for communicating that message in a meaningful fashion."

Barna believes Christians may have to use what he calls "Socratic evangelism," in which "you don't tell people about the truth, but you ask them about their perceptions of truth, and you keep quizzing them about their reactions until they get to a realistic answer."

Christians should "take the time to become sensitized to the different opportunities we have around us," Barna says. "I'm constantly amazed at how ignorant almost all of us are to the different tragedies, crises, and challenges that live right in our own path on a day-to-day basis. We sidestep them, we overlook them, we ignore them, we reject them—as opposed to having a mindset of, 'What would Christ do in this situation? Why is this opportunity in my

Facing the cultural change

path? Is there some kind of divine reason for that? How could I respond to that in a way that would be most pleasing to God?"

Barna also believes that evangelicals should ask what they can contribute to the Christian community.

"If the church is important to God, if I am a Christian and therefore called to be part of the church, then what is my contribution to that

Communication styles are different today.

body of believers, to that communion of saints? How can I be faithful to that particular calling? What are some of the things that I can bring to the table, rather than constantly taking stuff off the table for my own benefit?"

"I think the real answer is meeting people's needs," Whitehead says. "If you're going to change culture, they have to see your relevance. The greatest witness I've seen in a few instances is the Christian who goes to the homosexual halfway house and scrubs the floors."

Olasky believes that Christians should be willing to be "small successes" by secular standards because of their obedience to God.

"Do I want to get applause from the ruling elites, whether politically or in academia or in culture? Or, do I have the 'no little people' idea? Am I willing to go to the periphery? Am I willing to be a small success rather than a large success?" Olasky says.

He adds that evangelicals could redeem education by advocating school vouchers, even if they are home-schoolers or can easily afford to send their children to private Christian schools.

"There's a problem with subur-

ban parents, some of whom are Christian, who have made their peace with their public schools. We saw this in the California vote on vouchers. They don't understand how terrible the schools are in the inner cities. In order to hold on to their own, they're willing to sacrifice the interests of inner-city kids by maintaining that public school system," Olasky says.

Hunter believes that spiritually starved modernists will respond, if only Christians will hear their muffled cries.

"I think a large majority of secular people are asking profoundly religious questions, but they don't ask them in the traditional language of historic Christianity or of the particular denominations we come from. They ask it in their own way. If we have the ears to hear that, we can discover some points of contact between the gospel and what people are already saying they want."

"A lot of secular people ask questions about justification, but they don't know that term," Hunter says. "What they ask is how they can discover or experience acceptance, or how they can validate their life. Some of them even talk about the need to justify their life. I think they are even wanting something like what we would call a Christian or biblical world view. That's indicated with questions like, How can I make sense of my life? How can I find my place and my contribution in this world?"

"As best as I can tell, almost every church that works through a change in priorities and decides to become an apostolic congregation—to prioritize reaching unchurched people, to be culturally relevant enough to do that—most every church that makes the collective decision to do that pulls it off, and they start growing among unchurched populations."

Doug LeBlanc is a free-lance journalist from Colorado Springs, Colo. This article is reprinted with permission from Moody Monthly.

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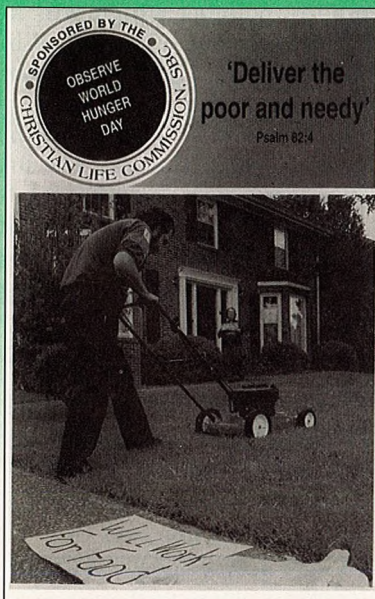
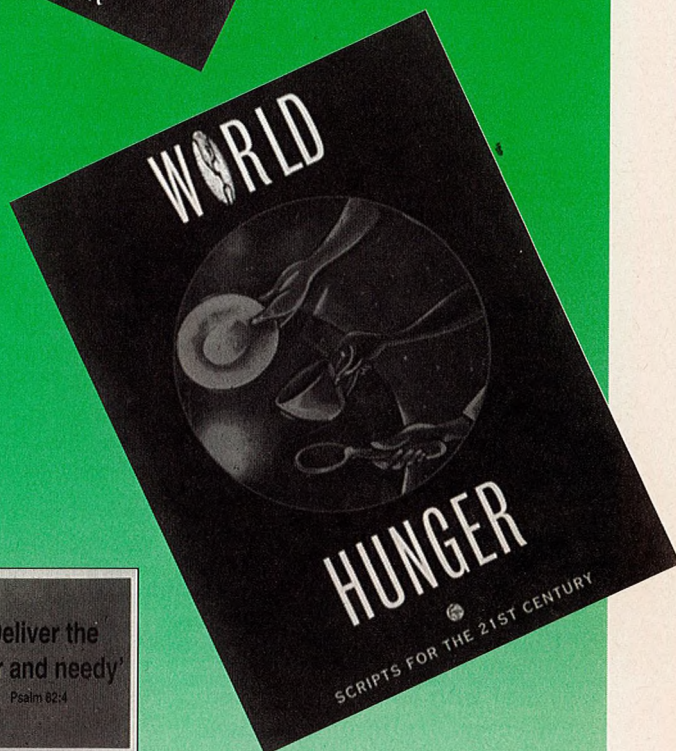
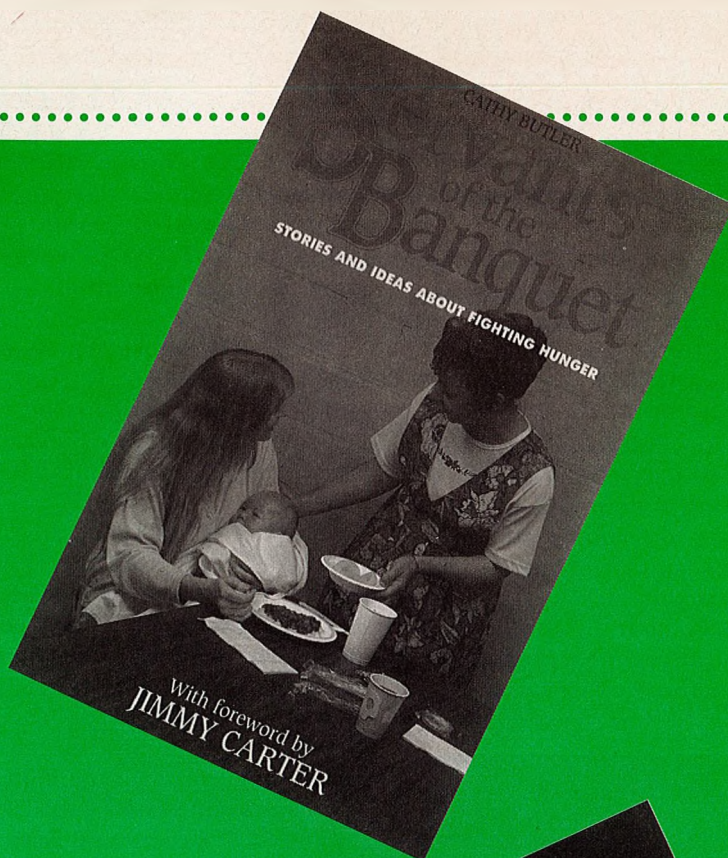
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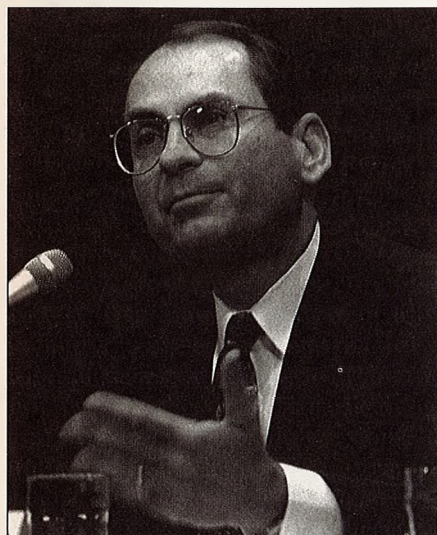
Light from the Capital

Delete religion from rules, CLC lawyer tells committee

Religion should be removed from proposed federal guidelines on harassment in the workplace, a Christian Life Commission staff member recently said in a congressional hearing.

At the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention a week later, President Bill Clinton sent a letter to Orlando pledging his willingness to work with the CLC on the regulations.

Since then, both the Senate and House of Representatives have passed measures expressing disagreement with the proposed rules.



Michael Whitehead testifies at EEOC guidelines hearing.

Controversy swirls around guidelines proposed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to deal with harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age and disability.

Only after the initial comment period, which was 60 days long, did widespread concerns begin to be expressed about the rules' potential impact on religious expression in the workplace. Critics say the guidelines could severely inhibit religious freedom and prohibit such activities as witnessing and displaying religious art at work. Under pressure from the public and

members of Congress, the EEOC reopened the comment period in May. The latest comment period ended June 13. It is uncertain when the final guidelines will be issued.

Four days before the deadline, Sen. Howell Heflin, D.-Ala., convened a hearing as chairman of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Courts and Administrative Practice.

Michael Whitehead, the CLC's general counsel, told the subcommittee, "We strongly oppose the consolidated guidelines. They constitute, perhaps inadvertently, one of the most serious threats to religious liberty in modern times. The 'one-size-fits-all' guidelines relegate religion to generic coverage alongside racist slurs and sexual vulgarity."

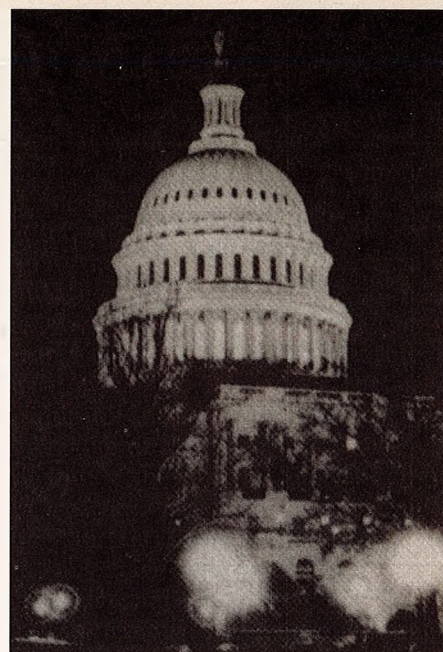
The CLC does not endorse "illegal religious harassment" but believes religion should be dealt with as a separate category, Whitehead said.

Religion should be dealt with separately, he testified, because: (1) Congress, the courts and the EEOC have treated it as a special category in the past; (2) the proposed guidelines are too subjective and surpass existing law, and (3) the rules will have a "chilling effect" on religious expression in the workplace.

"Employers will ask their conservative corporate attorneys to practice preventive law by devising company policies which will keep the company out of court," Whitehead testified. "Many companies will decide that a policy which generally prohibits all religious expression on the job is the only absolutely safe harbor."

The next week in Orlando, messengers to the SBC passed a resolution calling for religion to be deleted from the guidelines and to be dealt with in rules on religious discrimination.

After learning of the Committee on Resolutions' plan to present a resolution on the guidelines, Clinton sent by facsimile letters to SBC President Ed Young and CLC Exec-



utive Director Richard Land affirming his commitment to religious liberty.

"In the months to come, I welcome the input of the Christian Life Commission and other representatives of the religious community on these issues," the President told Land. "Religious freedom is perhaps the most precious of all American liberties, and I intend to continue doing all I can to protect this liberty."

The CLC expressed appreciation but said the letter did not satisfy its concerns.

"There's no commitment here to change the guidelines," Whitehead said.

- Tom Strode

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Dear (Your Senator/Representative Name):

I urge you to oppose any health care plan that will pay for abortion on demand.

I would consider it a serious violation of my conscience to be made complicit in the act of destroying human life if my taxes were used to pay for abortion or if my private insurance was mandated to cover abortion services. Thomas Jefferson said, "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical."

As a Christian who has learned about the health care reform plans under consideration from the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission, I support the principle of freedom of conscience. Many Christians fought for the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom so that the government was not able, through its taxing power, to violate the conscience of its citizenry by subsidizing practices some Americans oppose.

Millions of Americans are opposed to including abortion in health care reform. The snuffing-out of unborn children cannot be regarded as true health care. In fact, a poll published in the May 18, 1994 *Journal of the American Medical Association* revealed that 68% of Americans are opposed to including abortion in a national health care basic benefits package.

Please work against any health care reform plan that includes abortion on demand or does not expressly forbid abortion coverage. I look forward to your reply and learning your views on this important issue.

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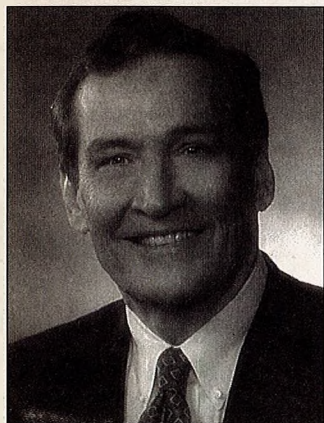
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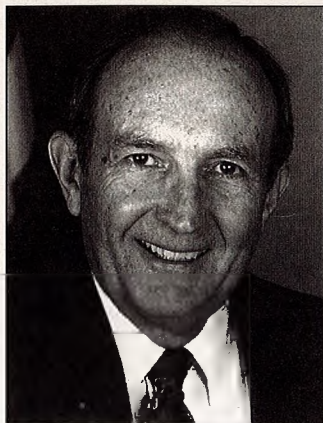
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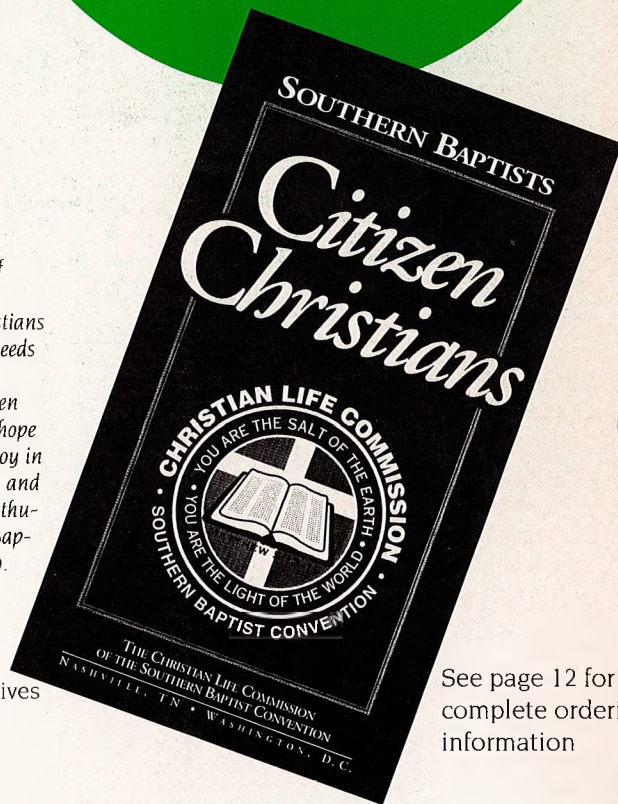
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As a Southern Baptist and as a member of Congress, I'm keenly aware of the need for informed, responsible involvement by Christians in our government. America desperately needs to return to the Judeo-Christian values our nation was founded upon. The video 'Citizen Christians' is an indispensable tool that I hope many Southern Baptist churches will employ in educating Christians about both our rights and responsibilities to impact government. I enthusiastically encourage my fellow Southern Baptists to utilize this critically important video.

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