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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1995

Convention overwhelmingly approves historic race resolution

By Bill Merrell

In 1845 the Southern Baptist Convention was formed, in part as the result of a dispute between Baptists in the North and those in the South over whether slaveholders could be appointed as missionaries. In 1995, just prior to its 150th birthday celebration in Atlanta, the Convention voted overwhelmingly to apologize to African-Americans and to ask forgiveness from them for racism, acknowledging "the role that slavery played" in its forma-

tion. The eighteen-paragraph resolution (see full text on p. 3) was the first time this acknowledgment had been officially and formally made by the Convention.

The resolution was presented to the Convention by Resolutions Committee Chairman Charles Carter on Tuesday, June 20. The timing itself was unique. Ordinarily, the first day resolutions are voted on is Wednesday, but by special order, the Convention acted upon this one on its opening day.

Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church of Birmingham, said to the messengers, "...under God we have a unique opportunity in this historic moment," the 150th anniversary of the SBC. He further stated, "This could be Southern Baptists' finest hour." He had seen the sinister side of racism in church life. Carter, as a nineteen-year-old pastor in 1955, had invited a young black minister to close a central

(Continued on Page 4)

Lethal failure

By C. Ben Mitchell

Southern Baptist giving to world hunger was down by almost a million dollars for 1994—from \$7.9 million in 1993 to a little over \$6.9 million in 1994. What accounts for such a downturn of receipts for world hunger? What has happened, and why?

Several factors might account for some of the shortfall. First, the United States has experienced a number of recent disasters. The aftermath of hurricanes and floods no doubt siphoned off some monies

which would routinely go for world and domestic hunger. In fact, according to Brotherhood Commission President James Williams, Elizabeth Dole of the American Red Cross says that eighty percent of the eight million meals provided following U.S. disasters since 1990 were provided by Southern Baptists. There can be little doubt Southern Baptists were financially contributing to disaster relief in their local communities.

When asked if there was some way to explain the difference

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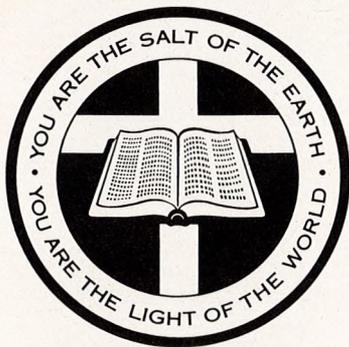
You can make a difference!
Observe World Hunger Day
October 8, 1995

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 Richard D. Land, Executive Director
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*"Helping changed people
 change the world"*

'Racial Reconciliation as Witness'

By Richard D. Land



The 1995 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta will long be looked back upon by Baptists and non-Baptists alike as one of the most historic events in the Convention's long and illustrious history. In their 150th year, Southern Baptists celebrated their history *and* approved the most sweeping structural and organizational changes in more than a half century. In so doing, Southern Baptists signified dramatically that while they are inspired by their history, they are also a forward-looking people who see their past as prologue and who want to be used by God to do great things for His Kingdom in the century ahead.

In passing their historic resolution on racial reconciliation (see pp. 1, 3, and 4 in this issue of *Light* for background information and the full text of the resolution) by an overwhelming majority, Southern Baptists demonstrated dramatically that while we are informed and inspired by our past, we are not *bound* by it. Our forebears were in many important ways godly and devoted people, but on the issue of slavery, and later on the issues of racism and segregation, most of them were tragically wrong in failing to overcome their captivity to their culture and its biases. All of us continue to live with the tragic consequences of their failure down to the present day.

Nothing Southern Baptists have done in this century has so captured the outside world's attention as the overwhelming passage of the racial reconciliation resolution. The nation's TV and radio networks, most prestigious periodicals and newspapers, and numerous international media outlets all gave prominent coverage to the Convention's action. Why is this so? This was not the first time Southern Baptists have addressed the issue of racial prejudice. As early as 1946 and as recently as 1993 Southern Baptists had denounced racism as sinful and wrong.

There are several reasons for the world's fascination with the racial reconciliation resolution. First, this resolution goes further than previous resolutions both in acknowledging the role slavery played in the Convention's formation and the failure of most Southern Baptists to bear witness unflinchingly and unflinchingly against the segregation and racism which followed slavery's abolition.

Second, the resolution acknowledges that this was unfinished family business between white and black Southern Baptists by apologizing to our African-American brothers and sisters and asking for their forgiveness. The personal and direct nature of the apology and the appeal for forgiveness captivated the world's attention. Truly practicing the biblical admonition that if you have wronged your brother you should seek his forgiveness and reconciliation is biblically correct, not politically correct, and it *will* get the outside world's attention.

Third, the racial reconciliation resolution gives hope and inspiration to a world inundated in resurgent racism in all of its insidious malignity. Everywhere one looks racism, ethnicity and tribalism threaten to rend the world's societies asunder. Witnessing to and practicing the reconciling power of the Gospel as Southern Baptists, black and white, did in Atlanta will always be seized upon as a beacon of hope in a world divided and lacerated by sin. The example of our

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Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention

WHEREAS, Since its founding in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention has been an effective instrument of God in missions, evangelism, and social ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that "Eve is the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20), and that "God shows no partiality, but in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him" (Acts 10:34-35), and that God has "made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26); and

WHEREAS, Our relationship to African-Americans has been hindered from the beginning by the role that slavery played in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention; and

WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist forebears defended the "right" to own slaves, and either participated in, supported, or acquiesced in the particularly inhumane nature of American slavery; and

WHEREAS, In later years Southern Baptists failed, in many cases, to support, and in some cases opposed, legitimate initiatives to secure the civil rights of African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, Racism has led to discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence, both in the Civil War and throughout the history of our nation; and

WHEREAS, Racism has divided the body of Christ and Southern Baptists in particular, and separated us from our African-American brothers and sisters; and

WHEREAS, Many of our congregations have intentionally and/or unintentionally excluded African-Americans from worship, membership, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Racism profoundly distorts our understanding of Christian morality, leading some Southern Baptists to believe that racial prejudice and discrimination are compatible with the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, Jesus performed the ministry of reconciliation to restore sinners to a right relationship with the Heavenly Father, and to establish right relations among all human beings, especially within the family of faith.

Therefore, be it **RESOLVED**, that we, the messengers to the Sesquicentennial meeting of the

Southern Baptist Convention, assembled in Atlanta, Georgia, June 20-22, 1995, unwaveringly denounce racism, in all its forms, as deplorable sin; and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that we affirm the Bible's teaching that every human life is sacred, and is of equal and immeasurable worth, made in God's image, regardless of race or ethnicity (Genesis 1:27), and that, with respect to salvation through Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28); and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that we lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest, and we recognize that the racism which yet plagues our culture today is inextricably tied to the past; and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that we apologize to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime; and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously (Psalm 19:13) or unconsciously (Leviticus 4:27); and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that we ask forgiveness from our African-American brothers and sisters, acknowledging that our own healing is at stake; and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that we hereby commit ourselves to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry; and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that we commit ourselves to be "doers of the Word" (James 1:22) by pursuing racial reconciliation in all our relationships, especially with our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 2:6), to the end that our light would so shine before others, "that they may see [our] good works and glorify [our] Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16); and

Be it finally **RESOLVED**, that we pledge our commitment to the Great Commission task of making disciples of all peoples (Matthew 28:19), confessing that in the church God is calling together one people from every tribe and nation (Revelation 5:9), and proclaiming that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only certain and sufficient ground upon which redeemed persons will stand together in restored family union as joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Convention approves historic race resolution

(Continued from Page 1)

Alabama youth rally in prayer. Ten hooded Ku Klux Klansmen marched into the next rally in protest.

After the historic vote, SBC President Jim Henry said, "The body has spoken clearly and definitively on this very important issue." Henry embraced Gary Frost, an African-American pastor from Youngstown, Ohio, and Frost accepted the SBC apology. Frost, SBC second vice president, noted he could not speak for all African-Americans, but, "I do speak on behalf of all those African-American believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who are committed to be obedient to the Word of God and long to see healing and unity in the body of Christ."

In formulating the resolution, the committee worked principally from a statement developed by a Racial Reconciliation Consultation held in Christian Life Commission offices in Nashville on May 22. The consultation brought together an

"This was unfinished business with our African-American brothers and sisters which we needed to address forthrightly and proactively."

equal number of black and white leaders who agreed it was crucial for Southern Baptists to deal biblically, honestly and positively with the matter.

Richard Land observed, "This was unfinished business with our African-American brothers and sisters, which we needed to address forthrightly and proactively. We could not celebrate our past with a clean conscience until we dealt with this issue."

A significant point in the development of the consultation document revolved around appropriate use of the word "repentance." Land explained, "As we discussed the

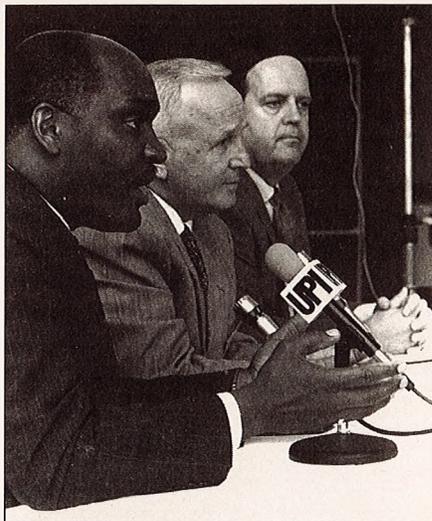


Photo by Van Payne

Southern Baptist leaders meet with reporters June 19 to introduce the resolution on racial reconciliation in Atlanta. Left to right are Gary Frost, Charles Carter and Richard Land.

issue the participants agreed we needed to deal with repentance in a biblical, responsible, productive way. There are many Southern Baptists, and I include myself among them, who are grieved by the role that racism has played in our denomination's past, and who are eager to apologize and ask for forgiveness from our African-American brothers and sisters; but who have grave theological problems with the concept of repenting for the sins of our forbears since we believe that only the individuals who committed the sins can repent for those sins.

"In other words, we are not Mormons. We cannot, by anything we do, change the status of our forbears before God for their sins. Consequently, our statement employs language which allows us to repent of the conscious and unconscious sins in our lifetime. We have an obligation and a responsibility to confess our own sin."

Response to the resolution was overwhelmingly positive. The African-American Fellowship of the SBC indicated "a sense of surprise at the frankness in the resolution. There was a sense of shock, and I

saw the spirit of forgiveness," said Frost, who presented the resolution to the group. The Fellowship gave its unanimous support.

E. W. McCall, pastor of St. Stephens Baptist Church, La Puente, Calif., and president of the Fellowship, said it was "time for the Convention to put this scar on its history behind and move forward toward kingdom building." The African-American Fellowship is a three-year-old organization the purpose of which is to help make the SBC and its entities aware of African-American concerns and to encourage fellowship and cooperation of African-American churches in the SBC.

When asked to evaluate the impact of the action on the Convention, Land commented, "I think it is difficult to overestimate the historical significance of this action. The true measure of success of the resolution's intent will be up to local SBC churches, individual church members and those who elect the trustees for SBC agencies and entities.

"Our ultimate goal should be the eradication of racism in our churches, our Convention and our country. If we are able to wrestle this cancer

"We could not celebrate our past with a clean conscience until we dealt with this issue."

of racism to the ground and throttle it, then... we will see a Southern Baptist Convention that ethnically reflects our society," Land said.

"Passing the resolution," Carter said in a news conference following the vote, was "the easiest thing we have done.... Words must now be implemented by actions and attitudes.... We haven't come as far as we need to go, but we certainly, I hope, have passed another milestone."

(From Baptist Press sources)

Lethal failure

(Continued from Page 1)

between this year's and last year's giving, personnel at both the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board could only say that gifts had not come in. Giving for hunger was down in twenty-five of forty conventions.

Jim Foster, Human Needs Consultant for the FMB, observed, "At the current rate at which gifts are being received and if projects are submitted in the same number as last year, the available funds will be completely depleted as early as January or February 1996.... Many worthy projects will either be rejected, delayed or severely reduced in scope. The losers will be the poor, the hurting, the suffering peoples to whom our missionaries minister."

This was not the case with giving to the Cooperative Program. CP giving was strong for the 1994 fiscal year. Southern Baptists continued to give to missions, but significant numbers of individuals and churches did not give to hunger relief through SBC channels.

Clearly, and sadly, hunger giving seems to be related to national news coverage of starvation in Third World countries. Southern Baptists' best year for hunger giving was 1985, a year the major networks showed starving Ethiopian children on their evening news programs. Hunger giving generally surges when the national level of awareness is highest. This is understandable, but still troubling.

Southern Baptist hunger giving ought not be governed by the national news, but by the needs of

starving persons. Southern Baptist hunger giving should not be dictated by the directors of the major news networks, but by the needs of hungry and malnourished children. Southern Baptist hunger giving should be motivated by faithfulness to the commands of the risen Christ, and by the needs of a hungry world.

The Lord Jesus Himself is our example. Out of compassion, He multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed more than five thousand (Matt. 14:13ff). One of His parables reminds us of the potent truth that ministry to the hungry and thirsty is ministry pleasing to Him (Matt. 25:34ff). In fact, ministry to the hungry and thirsty is one of the distinguishing marks of His sheep (Matt. 25:31-33). Samaritan service is not a suggestion; it is one of His commands (Luke 10:29-37). Loving one's neighbor as one loves self is one of the great commandments (Mark 12:31).

What does the evidence lead us to conclude? Simply stated, Southern Baptists, as a whole, have not been as faithful as we ought to the commands and example of Christ with respect to hunger ministry. This is not to say there are not some tireless servants who daily give of themselves and their resources. There are wonderful examples of sacrificial giving and ministry. But the laborers are too few.

The national economy did not show any serious decline in 1994, but Southern Baptist giving was down by more than twelve percent. We cannot claim, on the whole, that we did not have the resources. We

cannot claim we did not know of the need. We cannot claim we did not know our duty. We are left defenseless before the bar of judgment. We have not been faithful in this matter. We have sinned. We are without excuse. More importantly, people will die because of our failure.

Unquestionably, Southern Baptists have the best system for delivering food to the hungry. Every cent...repeat...every cent...given to hunger through the Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board goes directly to hunger relief. Not a penny goes to administrative overhead. We know of no other hunger ministry which can match that claim.

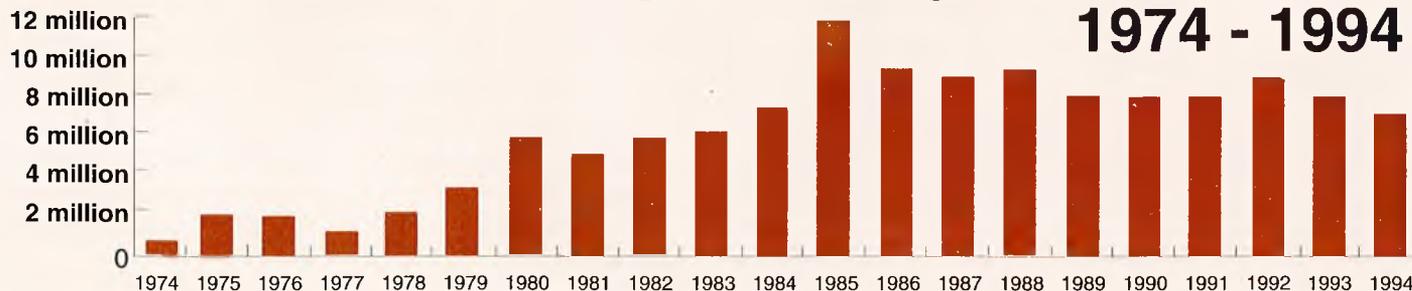
Congress is presently reexamining welfare and other social programs. Southern Baptists should be gearing up to do more, not less.

The answer is for us to return to faithful obedience and redouble our efforts. Individuals and churches must commit themselves to regular, systematic hunger giving if we are to restore our integrity on this issue. We cannot let the national consciousness be our conscience. We must set the standard for sacrificial giving. Southern Baptists have an obligation to the world, an obligation to God, an obligation to others and an obligation to ourselves. "Love your neighbor as yourself," said our Lord. We can do nothing less. Neighbor love is not *either* sharing the gospel or feeding the belly. Neighbor love is *both!* To do otherwise is a lethal failure.

C. Ben Mitchell is Consultant on Biomedical and Life Issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Southern Baptist Hunger Gifts

1974 - 1994



1994 Hunger Receipts by States

State	Domestic (HMB)	Foreign (FMB)	1994 Total	1993 Total	% Increase/ Decrease	1994 Per Person Giving
Alabama	\$ 151,653	\$ 646,331	\$ 797,984	\$ 776,091	+2.82	\$.75
Alaska	951	3,053	4,004	8,505	-52.92	.18
Arizona	5,246	24,260	29,506	27,849	+5.95	.22
Arkansas	33,350	135,138	168,488	198,453	-15.10	.33
California	12,274	65,957	78,231	93,927	-16.71	.20
Colorado	869	20,803	21,672	18,635	+16.30	.32
Dakotas	228	683	911	1,120	-18.66	.11
District of Columbia	--	1,727	1,727	5,594	-69.13	.07
Florida	41,711	296,079	337,790	313,307	+7.81	.34
Georgia	103,039	386,193	489,232	540,062	-9.41	.38
Hawaii	4,329	17,787	22,116	27,622	-19.93	1.28
Illinois	25,118	94,860	119,978	106,362	+12.80	.48
Indiana	9,169	29,607	38,776	44,023	-11.92	.41
Iowa	987	3,949	4,936	3,073	+60.63	.40
Kansas-Nebraska	7,202	25,848	33,050	35,860	-7.84	.35
Kentucky	78,218	287,844	366,062	423,818	-13.63	.47
Louisiana	42,790	168,903	211,693	241,184	-12.22	.34
Maryland-Delaware	16,151	97,186	113,337	106,362	+6.56	1.10
Michigan	2,159	9,936	12,095	13,880	-12.86	.24
Minnesota-Wisconsin	385	3,115	3,500	3,615	-3.18	.24
Mississippi	47,912	190,963	238,875	243,937	-2.08	.34
Missouri	100,461	391,358	491,819	541,302	-9.14	.73
Montana	797	3,883	4,680	3,510	+33.33	.41
Nevada	1,341	6,130	7,471	7,960	-6.14	.25
New England	3,007	9,973	12,980	11,684	+11.09	.59
New Jersey	539	--	539	--	--	--
New Mexico	8,632	41,889	50,521	50,134	+0.77	.43
New York	5,094	7,501	12,595	13,734	-8.29	.58
North Carolina	106,197	389,876	496,073	932,661	-46.81	.41
Northwest	9,053	18,200	27,253	36,548	-25.43	.32
Ohio	7,655	34,201	41,856	44,672	-6.30	.27
Oklahoma	24,290	101,973	126,263	163,132	-22.60	.16
Pennsylvania-So. Jersey	2,457	11,395	13,852	12,242	+13.15	.64
South Carolina	56,195	396,571	452,766	608,929	-25.65	.62
Tennessee	77,278	387,408	464,686	459,744	+1.08	.41
Texas	165,650	694,254	859,904	1,109,395	-22.49	.32
Utah-Idaho	686	22,451	23,137	5,868	+294.29	1.14
Virginia	98,798	544,750	643,548	585,951	+9.83	1.06
West Virginia	3,797	15,003	18,800	20,125	-6.58	.55
Wyoming	1,966	8,715	10,681	13,592	-21.42	.69
Other	4,042 ¹	106,744 ²	110,786	84,818	+30.62	
Total	\$ 1,261,676	\$ 5,702,497	\$ 6,964,173	\$ 7,939,280	-12.28	

¹Includes Canada and other countries.

²Includes overseas.

Compiled from information provided by the Foreign and Home Mission Boards.
Figures rounded to the nearest dollar.

OBSERVE WORLD HUNGER DAY

October 8, 1995

Quantity	Materials	Price	Total
	New Bulletin Insert for World Hunger emphasis (Undated, color)	\$.06	
	New Poster - World Hunger Promotional Poster (Undated, color)	.95	
	New Sermon Outline for World Hunger emphasis (2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:6-9)	.22	
	Updated Pamphlet - What Are Southern Baptists Doing About Hunger? (with statistics)	.11	
	Book of Plays - World Hunger Scripts for the 21st Century (This includes 5 hunger plays, a number of hunger-related worship materials and reproduction rights within a local congregation.)	8.95	
	New Hunger Fact Sheet (includes hunger giving by states 1974-1994)	.22	
	Pamphlet - The Bible Speaks on Hunger	.17	
	Pamphlet - Issues and Answers: Hunger	.17	
	Christian Actions for the World's Hungry	.11	
	New Testament Studies for a World Hunger Emphasis	.22	
	Old Testament Studies for a World Hunger Emphasis	.22	
	Calendar - World Hunger Wall Calendar	.17	
	Placemat - World Hunger Placemat	.06	
	Bank for World Hunger Relief Offering	.25	
	Hunger Book - <i>Servants of the Banquet</i> by Cathy Butler	6.95	
	Book: <i>What Shall We Do in a Hungry World?</i>	.99	
	World Hunger Resource Package - One of each of above resources	18.50	
	1994 Guide - World Hunger Awareness/Action Guide	.75	
	Guide - Hunger Alert: World Hunger Awareness/Action Guide for Youth	3.30	
	New CLC Hunger Videotape: "Within Your Reach: Hunger in the Homeland" 1/2" VHS, 25 min.	19.95	
	Videotape: "What Shall We Do in a Hungry World?" - 1/2" VHS, 45 min.	12.95	
	Videotape: "Show Me You Care" - 1/2" VHS, 15 min.	8.95	
	Videotape: "Love in Action in a Hungry World" - 1/2" VHS, 12 min.	16.95	
	Pamphlet: Sanctity of Human Life—Genetic Engineering: Bane or Blessing?	.33	

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By C. Ben Mitchell

Almost all abortion advocates and a few pro-life evangelicals argue that we should not use the term "murder" to describe elective abortion. They maintain that the use of such an emotion-laden term incites persons to violence and leaves pro-life Christians with no alternative but to support abortion clinic violence. I believe there are good and sufficient reasons both for using the vividly descriptive and accurate term "murder" and for abhorring violence aimed at abortionists and abortion clinics.

With respect to the latter issue, "The Struggle Against Abortion: Why the Use of Lethal Force Is Not Morally Justifiable," a document produced by a consultation convened by the Christian Life Commission, adequately refutes the arguments of those who would perpetrate violence against abortionists. Space does not permit a rehearsal of those arguments.

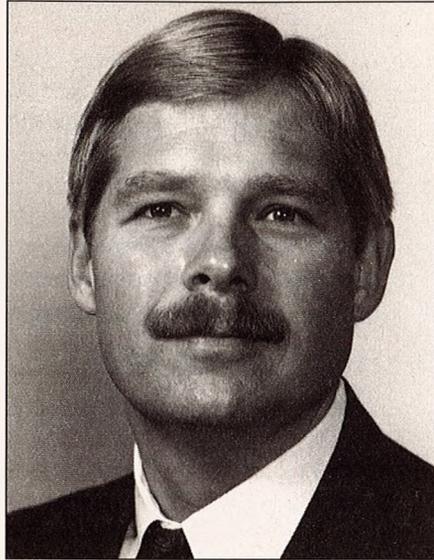
In that document, the framers

"To use less vivid or euphemistic language only salves the conscience of a nation which has allowed almost 30 million babies to die unjustly."

implicitly made a distinction between morally unjustifiable killing (e.g., what Paul Hill and John Salvi have done) and morally justifiable killing (e.g., self-defense). Clearly, abortion is an example of morally unjustifiable killing.

Abortion, by definition, is killing. Even many abortion advocates, when pressed to do so, will acknowledge that abortion is killing. There is no other honest way to define the extermination of

Call abortion what it is: Murder



C. Ben Mitchell

life in the womb. Pro-abortionists argue, however, that since abortion is legal in the United States it is not legally murder.

While abortion may be legal, it remains a morally reprehensible act. The sixth commandment, "You shall not commit murder" (Ex. 20:13, NIV) is one of God's moral laws. Nonjustifiable taking of human life is murder. Elective abortion is the unjustifiable killing of unborn human life. Therefore, morally, biblically and ethically, elective abortion is murder. As Philip E. Devine perceptively has put it, "to say that an act is wrong because it is murder is to say that the act is wrong because it is homicide, and to indicate further that none of the possible justifications or mitigation of homicide obtain" (*The Ethics of Homicide*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1978, p. 17). Even though elective abortion is not prosecutable as murder, the practice violates the divine command against homicide.

Another crucial point to be made regards the appropriate use of language in the debate. Euphemism is the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expres-

sion for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant. Social convention and politeness may occasionally dictate that we employ euphemism. It is indecent, however, to use this speech device to neutralize the moral content of words meant to distinguish right from wrong. Vandalism is not souvenir-hunting; wife abuse is not being macho and abortion is not post-conceptive fertility control.

To refuse to call nonjustifiable homicide "murder" is to weaken the pro-life argument significantly. The pro-life contention is not merely that abortion is killing—almost everyone agrees with that—but that abortion is morally unjustifiable killing, i.e., murder. We should not avoid the use of morally accurate and biblically sound language to describe the assassination of unborn lives.

Language indeed has consequences. If pro-life Christians do not "tell it like it is," who will? If we do not hold our culture's feet to the fire, who will? To use less vivid or euphemistic language only salves the conscience of a nation which has allowed almost 30 million babies to die unjustly.

We do not always have to call abortion "murder," as though we had only one word in our vocabulary. We may call it "unjustified killing," "homicide," "immoral killing," or a variety of other words or phrases. The point remains, however, that elective abortion is a murderous assault on unborn babies.

We dare not permit ourselves to use euphemisms for murder. We cannot be satisfied to call abortion merely the "termination of unwanted pregnancies" or an expression of one's "reproductive choice." Doing so not only diminishes the force of our argument, but further endangers the unborn

(Continued on Page 10)

By Fisher Humphreys

There are three reasons why we who are pro-life should not call abortion "murder." One is legal, one is moral and one is strategic.

The first reason not to call abortion "murder" is a legal reason. Legally, it is not murder to kill a human being if you do not realize it is a human being. For example, if a hunter shoots what he thinks is a deer and kills another hunter, he, legally, has not committed murder.

Abortion providers do not think they are killing human beings. They think that fetuses are not human beings.

Of course, pro-lifers tell them repeatedly they are wrong about this. But that does not change the fact that, like the deer hunter, abortion providers do not think they are killing human beings; therefore, what they are doing is not murder in a technical, legal sense.

Furthermore, in the United

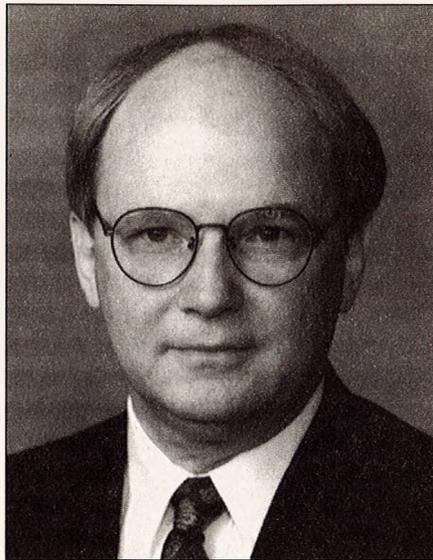
"Let us stop calling abortion 'murder.' Instead, let us call it cruel and sinful; let us call it an immoral act and a national tragedy."

States today, not all killing is legally murder. Killing soldiers during a war is not, and executing criminals is not. Similarly, American laws do not categorize abortion as murder.

The second reason not to call abortion "murder" is a moral reason. It is a little more complicated than the first.

In March 1993, Michael Griffin shot and killed an abortion provider, Dr. David Gunn, in

Abortion should not be called 'murder'



Fisher Humphreys

Pensacola, Fla. This act set in motion a discussion within the pro-life movement. This discussion has made it clear that there is a link between the language of "murder" used by the movement and the violence which some extremists are now practicing.

Most pro-life advocates are opposed to the shooting of abortion providers. Nevertheless, when they call abortion murder, they unintentionally help to provide a moral justification for killing abortion providers.

This is true because many Americans believe it is morally permissible for individuals to use lethal force to prevent the murder of the innocent. They believe, for example, that it is morally permissible to shoot a man who is robbing an innocent woman and is about to kill her.

When pro-lifers say "abortion is murder" to people who already believe that the use of lethal force to prevent murder is morally permissible, they provide them with a moral justification for killing abortion providers.

It is not enough for pro-life advocates just to say that violence

against abortion providers is wrong. Once we understand how the language of "murder" contributes to the moral justification of that violence, we should stop using the language.

One pro-life ethicist, David Gushee, has gone even further. He writes: "I believe that those of us involved in the [pro-life] movement face a time of repentance for the extremism we have had a part in spawning. It seems to me that repentance needs to focus on: a failure in the way in which we have articulated the sacredness of unborn human life [and] a failure to prevent the rise of increasingly inflammatory rhetoric and Holocaust imagery..."

The third reason not to call abortion "murder" is a strategic reason. The pro-life movement has great momentum now. It is convincing more and more people that abortion is wrong. For example, the number of abortions in this country is declining; so is the percentage of women of childbearing age who are having abortions.

When pro-lifers call abortion "murder," and when people who agree with that description use violence against abortion providers, their actions hurt the pro-life cause. The wisest strategy for the pro-life movement is to stop calling abortion "murder."

"But," a reader may respond, "even if all this is true, the fact remains: I believe that abortion is murder, so I should call it that."

That is an impressive argument, and it probably will influence many readers to reject my position. However, even though it is impressive, it contradicts an important biblical teaching.

The Bible teaches that all our statements should be true.

(Continued on Page 10)

Racial Reconciliation as Witness

(Continued from Page 2)

commitment to eradicate racism in Southern Baptist life gives hope to people the world over who know increasingly from personal experience that merely human and government solutions have not, and never will, suffice. The world notices when the Gospel which is preached is also practiced. It always will.

They will take even more notice of the transforming power of the Gospel as we work together in the months and years ahead to liberate our churches and our denomination from the remaining shackles of racism.

All of us who experienced the reconciliation of Atlanta owe a

great debt to those Southern Baptists, both black and white, who went before us and who did bear witness, often at considerable personal cost, to the power of the Gospel to overcome the evils of racism. To all of those men and women I say a heartfelt, "Thank you."

If I may close on a more personal note. The most meaningful thing said to me during the Convention was by my wife: "Richard, I am so happy for you. You have been talking this way since I met you in seminary in 1969." She was right, I have. And I have never been more grateful to, and more proud of, Southern Baptists than I was in

Atlanta. This was our finest hour and a transforming moment in our beloved denomination's life. We came to Georgia, and we apologized for our ancestors having failed to bear witness against the transcendent moral evil of their time, slavery.

I am so grateful to God that our grandchildren will not have to assemble fifty years hence and apologize that we did not bear witness against the transcendent moral evil of our time, abortion. We have spoken for the unborn, and with God's help, we will continue to speak until we have achieved the abolition of abortion on demand.

Point

Mitchell: Abortion is murder

(Continued from Page 8)

and, by extension, persons at the other end of life. For if we are content to use euphemisms for abortion, we will use euphemisms such as "death with dignity" or "the right to die" to describe murder at the other end of the life continuum.

If we were to be consistent with this approach, we would also euphemize other morally reprehensible acts. Homosexuality would become simply "an alternative lifestyle" or "lesbian partnership." Adultery would become a "coping

mechanism for a bad marriage" or an "expression of mid-life crisis." Sexual harassment would be designated "gender affirming behavior" since, after all, men are (we are told) merely acknowledging the desirability of the opposite gender and expressing their own evolutionary proclivity to multiple sexual relationships as a means of propagating the species. For those who are honest with the facts, the use of euphemisms for morally reprehensible acts is nearly as reprehensible as the behaviors themselves.

We do aspire to biblical, reasonable, relevant, civil, wise, thoughtful and compassionate Christian moral discourse. At the same time, we aspire to prophetic honesty. John the Baptist lost his head and Jesus His life for being prophetically honest. Abortion may be legal in the United States, but morally it is still murder in the first degree.

C. Ben Mitchell is Consultant on Biomedical and Life Issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Counterpoint

Humphreys: Don't call abortion 'murder'

(Continued from Page 9)

However, it does not teach that truthfulness alone is a sufficient justification for us to utter them. The Bible teaches that there is another condition our statements must meet. That condition is love.

Christians are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Calling

abortion "murder" is not speaking the truth in love, because it is unloving to provide moral support for those who use violence against abortion providers.

Therefore, let us stop calling abortion "murder." Instead, let us call it cruel and sinful; let us call it an immoral act and a national

tragedy. Then we will be legally accurate, morally just and strategically wise. And we will be speaking the truth in love.

Fisher Humphreys is Professor of Divinity at the Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Never again! The Holocaust and Gentiles

David P. Gushee, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust: A Christian Interpretation* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994). xiv + 258 pages.

By C. Ben Mitchell

Everyone knows something about the Holocaust. The word itself causes most to wince at the remembrance of the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews. Fewer know anything about the *hasidei ummot ha-alam* ("the righteous ones among the nations of the world") who rescued Jews from Hitler's "Final Solution."

David P. Gushee, Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, introduces us to these heroic men and women in his splendid volume, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*. Gushee's candid presupposition is that "The Holocaust is an event in the history of the Christian faith and the Christian church. Both in its historical antecedents and in its wartime course, the annihilation of the European Jews was inextricably related to Christianity and the behavior of the Christian people" (p. 13). It is an indisputable fact of history that many Jews died at the hands of *professing* Christians. Even though some Christians refused to assist in Hitler's genocidal program, only a relatively small number of Gentile believers undertook actively to rescue their Jewish neighbors. In fact, one of the most potent reminders of Gushee's volume is: "There was no such thing as harmless noninvolvement" (p. 6). There were no innocent bystanders. Neutrality was complicity.

The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust is an exercise in Christian ethics. "If we can learn something about the nature of a faithful Christian way of life, and about what may be done to nurture such moral quality in the lives of our own communities of faith, then our study will have been well worth the effort," (p. 17) says the author.

In seven supremely readable chapters, Gushee weaves history and ethics in such a way as to leave an indelible mark upon the heart and mind of the reader. The first three chapters chronicle the prelude to destruction, the invasion and conquest of Poland, the desperate conditions of the ghettos and survey Hitler's "Final Solution of the Jewish Question."

Chapter three paints a not-so-attractive portrait of the infamous Gentile actors and bystanders in the Holocaust. The story is one of betrayal, thievery and complicity. Many Gentiles aided the Nazis in their quest to expropriate Jewish wealth and demoralize the Jewish population.

The most troubling characters in the story were the so-called "bystanders," those who stood by, remaining "purposefully uninvolved" (p. 61). "...the involvement of the bystander is distinctive. He or she is approached (directly or indirectly) by perpetrator or victim, both of whom seek the bystander's involvement on their side and identification with their cause. The bystander's response is to identify with neither but instead to try to carve out a safe space for noninvolvement and nonidentification" (p. 62). Gentile perpetrators and bystanders participated in a moral failure of gargantuan proportions.

"While Jewish babies were being thrown alive into fiery pits, and while trucks full of naked women were making their way to the gas chambers, a small number of Gentiles were working furiously throughout Europe to save babies and women and others from this unspeakable fate" (p. 69).

Chapter four tells the tale of persons such as Raoul Laporterie, who personally escorted Jews out of Germany, himself emerging penniless from the war. And there was Paul Grueninger, a Swiss police chief, who helped hundreds of Jews slip across the border. Mordecai Paldiel, director of Israel's "Depart-

ment for the Righteous Among the Nations," estimates that there were between 50,000 and 500,000 Gentile rescuers. Best known among them was Corrie Ten Boom, whose family hid countless Jews in their Dutch home in Haarlem. Imprisoned Gentiles even helped Jews in the death camps by "siding with them in disputes with SS personnel, finding decent living quarters for them, teaching them various languages, and providing moral support" (p. 88).

Chapter five seeks to answer why the Gentile rescuers helped Jews. Following an interesting sociology of rescuers, Gushee treats the motives for rescue: personal ties with Jews, theological interests of the churches, patriotism, etc. Somewhat surprisingly, a relatively low percentage of rescuers cite religion as even one of their motivations. Religious motivation occupies the discussion in the sixth chapter.

Clearly, some of the Righteous Gentiles were motivated by "a strong sense of religious kinship with Jews as a people" (p. 119). Especially among some Dutch Reformed and other Protestant rescuers, the concept of Jews as "the chosen people of God" was a very strong motivation to help. Furthermore, the recollection of past persecution—what Herbert Schlossberg has called "the fragrance of oppression"—drove some Protestants to risk their lives for Jews.

The final chapter draws significant implications from the lives of the Righteous Gentiles. Unrighteous Christians, "average" Christians, and righteous Christians are contrasted in this chapter. Gushee's analysis of a Christian faith that nurtures righteousness is worth the price of the book. In short, *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust* is a manual of history, theology, ethics and discipleship. No wonder David Gushee is rapidly becoming one of evangelicalism's premier ethicists. This is a volume to be read, studied and lived.

CLC to get new name in reorganization

By Bill Merrell

By an approximate two-to-one margin—9,590 to 5,357—Southern Baptist Convention messengers adopted the Program and Structure Study Committee's "Covenant for a New Century" during business sessions in Atlanta.

Approval of the report reduces the number of SBC entities from nineteen to twelve and sets in motion a restructuring process to be implemented by 1997. Messengers also approved a bylaw change listing the entities in the new SBC structure, which must be ratified by messengers at the 1996 Convention in New Orleans. If approval of the required bylaw changes occurs then, the Christian Life Commission will have a new name recognizing its expanded program assignment and better reflecting what the CLC does.

The PSSC was appointed by Executive Committee Chairman

Fred Wolfe in response to a motion referred from the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention. The PSSC report states, "The central responsibility of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is to apply Christian truth to the moral issues of the day and to promote religious liberty as a cherished Baptist distinctive." The report recognized the SBC "has expanded the important work of the Christian Life Commission in recent years, including the explicit assignment of religious liberty promotion."

It recommends "that the name of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention be changed to the *Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*, thus reflecting its expanded assignment and clarifying its ministry to the Convention on behalf of its churches. This new name will more accurately and clearly identify the nature and

purpose of the commission's assignment and will help the general public and government agencies to understand the commission's work," it concludes.

CLC trustees enthusiastically endorsed the proposed changes during their meeting in March.

Mark Coppenger, who prior to his recent election to the presidency of Midwestern Seminary served as Vice President for Convention Relations, said following the SBC meeting, "The Convention is underscoring the widely understood strategic importance of the CLC. It recognizes this agency as critical to addressing the needs of our nation.

"The 'Covenant for a New Century' acknowledges that the more than seventy programs now in place are good. The Covenant strengthens and conserves the best things, and the efforts of the CLC are among the best things that Southern Baptists do."

Professor, not school, testing RU 486, Sloan says

Baylor College of Medicine is not collaborating with Planned Parenthood of Houston in the clinical testing of RU 486, Robert Sloan said June 1 upon becoming president of Baylor University.

His response came after media reports to the contrary and expressions of concern by Texas Baptists.

The new president also said Baylor University is powerless to remove its eleven elected representatives from the medical school's board or to force the school to change its name.

Sloan responded to a request from sixteen Baylor alumni for the school in Waco, Texas, to halt its appointment of one-fourth of the forty-four-member board of trustees of the medical school, which is located in Houston. The alumni also asked Sloan to take legal steps to end the use of "Baylor" in the medical school's name.

The medical school's charter, which is granted by the state of Texas, provides for twenty-five percent of its trustees to be elected

by the university's board of regents, so Baylor cannot change the charter, Sloan said. It is the medical school's right to use the Baylor name as long as it retains its accreditation, he said.

Although the schools share the same name, they say their affiliation ended in 1969, apart from the trustee relationship.

The most surprising disclosure in Sloan's response is that a Baylor College of Medicine professor, not the school, is working with the Houston affiliate of Planned Parenthood in the testing of the abortion drug. His role in evaluating the drug's effectiveness and safety is as an independent contractor, Sloan said.

Three times between Oct. 28 and Jan. 18, the *Houston Chronicle* reported an alliance between Baylor College of Medicine and Planned Parenthood in the testing. Twice, the newspaper reported the trials would be conducted in Houston by Planned Parenthood "in collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine."

In its news release last October, Planned Parenthood of Houston said it "will collaborate" with the school. That information was "imprecise," said Planned Parenthood Communications Director Susan Nenny, because the contract is with Alfred Poindexter, principal investigator of the trials and Baylor ob/gyn professor.

In the release, Poindexter said, "Extensive research in many areas of reproductive biology has taken place at Baylor College of Medicine. We look forward to participating" in this project.

The collaboration also was reported in a February issue of *World* magazine. In a letter to *World*, Claire Bassett, the medical school's communications director, said the school is not affiliated with Baylor University or the Baptist General Convention of Texas. She did not say, however, the school was not involved in the clinical tests.

On the Planned Parenthood release, Baylor's Bassett is listed as a contact.

Resolution on a Constitutional Amendment Regarding Prayer and Religious Expression

WHEREAS, The 104th Congress is considering an amendment to the Constitution to protect the freedom of private persons, including students in public schools, to engage in voluntary prayer and other religious expression in circumstances in which expression of a nonreligious character would be permitted; and to prohibit the denial of benefits or other discrimination against persons on account of the religious character of their speech or status; and

WHEREAS, Although specific language has not been selected, some proposals would also stop lawsuits challenging government accommodation of public or ceremonial acknowledgements of the religious heritage, beliefs and traditions of its people, such as the motto "In God We Trust" on coinage, or the display of the Ten Commandments in public buildings; and

WHEREAS, The biblical principle of religious liberty is rooted in the nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the nature of the human spirit as created by God: Spiritual regeneration and reformation can and should occur only as an individual freely responds by faith to God's work and God's Word, and not in response to coercion by any person, government or church; and

WHEREAS, The constitutional principle of religious liberty is rooted in the convictions of Baptist forebears like John Leland and other early Americans who, despite arguments that no amendment was necessary, insisted upon certain amendments to the Constitution, resulting in the First Amendment Religion Clauses: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;" and

WHEREAS, With growing frequency the Supreme Court has issued confusing and contradictory rulings which have led some lower courts and public officials to interpret the Establishment Clause as prohibiting what the Free Exercise Clause should protect, and to interpret the Free Speech Clause as prohibiting discrimination or censorship based on the content of

speech, with the exception that religious speech on government-owned property or at government-sponsored meetings must be treated discriminatorily in the name of strict separation of church and state; and

WHEREAS, After decades of hoping that legal briefs, statutory remedies, or changes in court personnel could reverse the rising tide of discrimination against religious expression in the schoolhouse, workplace and public square, it is time for the American people to express their will clearly through the constitutional amendment process which provides the surest way to stop such discrimination.

Therefore, be it **RESOLVED,** That we, the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, June 20-22, 1995, call on Congress to adopt and send to the states for ratification a constitutional amendment to protect the freedom of private persons, including students in public schools, to engage in voluntary prayer and other religious expression in circumstances in which expression of a nonreligious character would be permitted; and to prohibit the denial of benefits or other discrimination against persons on account of the religious character of their speech or status; and to permit government accommodation of public or ceremonial acknowledgements of religious heritage, beliefs and traditions of its people; and

Be it further **RESOLVED,** That we call on the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission to work for passage of such an amendment, while also advocating Baptist principles of freedom of conscience, to prevent government from composing, compelling or subsidizing prayer or religious expression by any person; and

Be it finally **RESOLVED,** That on this 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention, we reaffirm the principle and pledge ourselves to the practice of our God-given right of religious liberty, in order to obey God's commands to pray without ceasing and to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone, everywhere.

Light from the Capital

Prayer amendment applauded by SBC

The Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 21 in Atlanta, adopted a resolution supporting a prayer amendment to the U.S. Constitution, with enthusiastic applause and an overwhelming vote. (See resolution text on page 13.) The resolution acknowledged that "specific language has not been selected" by Congress, but it endorsed three principles common to the leading versions of a "Religious Equality Amendment."

- First, government must "protect the freedom of private persons, including students in public schools, to engage in voluntary prayer and other religious expression" in places and circumstances where expressions of a "nonreligious character" are also permitted.

- Second, an amendment would "prohibit the denial of benefits or other discrimination against persons on account of the religious character of their speech or status."

- Third, "government accommodation of public or ceremonial acknowledgements of the religious heritage, beliefs and traditions of its people" would be permissible, "such as the motto 'In God We Trust' on coinage, or the display of the Ten

Commandments in public buildings."

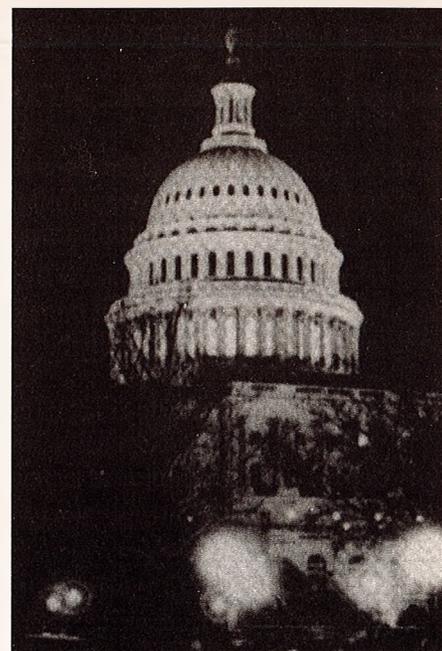
The resolution called on the 104th Congress to "adopt and send to the states for ratification a constitutional amendment" containing these principles and urged the Christian Life Commission to work for its passage, "while also advocating Baptist principles of freedom of conscience, to prevent government from composing, compelling or subsidizing prayer or religious expression by any person." For example, prayer in schools would be student-led, student-initiated and not mandated by law or led by teachers.

During the debate on the resolution, Larry Bishop, a messenger from First Baptist Church, Norman, Okla., and an attorney, said, "I cannot possibly vote for anything that doesn't let me know how the Constitution is to be amended."

While we don't know yet the wording Congress will propose, we do know the principles to which Southern Baptists are committed. This resolution crystallizes those commitments. The CLC staff can assure Mr. Bishop and other Baptists that we share his concern about the importance of the exact wording of an amendment.

We will not endorse any particular text until we are confident it is consistent with the principles contained in this resolution. Furthermore, after a particular text is crafted, it must be approved by a two-thirds vote of each house of Congress and then ratified by at least thirty-eight states. There will be ample opportunity for every American citizen to give close scrutiny to the exact wording of the proposed amendment during the ratification process, which could take up to seven years.

Kenton L. Hunt, a messenger from First Southern Baptist Church, Williamsport, Pa., said during floor debate he opposed the resolution because students are already entitled to pray in schools. "Unfortunately, we continue to dis-



courage this kind of activity [prayer], because we are standing and saying that it cannot be done.... We already have the freedom to do these things," Hunt said.

Unfortunately, the freedom Youth Minister Hunt described is not enjoyed everywhere, and it hasn't always been enjoyed in Williamsport. In 1984, I worked with Jim Smart on the case of *Lisa Bender v. Williamsport, Pa., School District*, in which a high school student fought all the way to the Supreme Court for the right to have a Bible club and prayer meeting after school. Lisa Bender also testified before Congress in support of an amendment, before the enactment of the Equal Access Act in 1985. In 1990, a student in Omaha had to go to the Supreme Court to tell school officials the Equal Access Act was constitutional, and treating religious students equally does not violate the establishment clause.

These students are not confused by talk about the need for an amendment. They have experienced the reality of religious discrimination, but refused to accept it in silence. They are not deterred by bureaucratic double-talk or ACLU intimidation. Rather, they are energized by it, determined to obey God's commands to pray without ceasing and to share Jesus Christ with everyone, everywhere.

Express your opinion

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

White House Comment Line
(202) 456-1111

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Capitol Switchboard
(202) 224-3121

They also demand that government fully acknowledge their God-given right to religious liberty. Those who seem confused are the judges and public officials who still think that student religious expression, out loud, during the school day or at any school-sponsored event violates the establishment clause.

We had hoped for some solution short of a constitutional amendment. The SBC resolution says, "After decades of hoping that legal briefs, statutory remedies or changes in court personnel could reverse the rising tide of discrimination against religious expression in the school house, workplace and public square, it is time for the American people to express their will clearly through the constitutional amendment process which provides the surest way to stop such discrimination."

A subcommittee of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee held hearings in June and July in cities including Washington, Los Angeles, Tampa and Harrisonburg, Va. Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., testified at the Harrisonburg hearing. The purpose of these field hearings is to gather evidence of specific cases of discrimination against religious expression. Language will then be crafted which will attempt to address and solve as many problems as possible. The evidence to date shows religious discrimination, in the name of strict separation of church and state, is still widespread.

Rep. Charles T. Canady, R.-Fla., chairs the Constitution Subcommittee.

- Michael Whitehead



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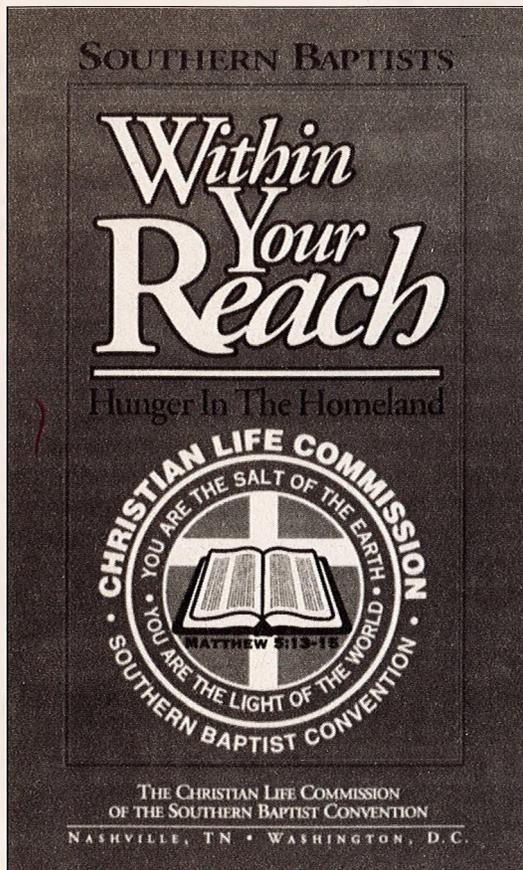
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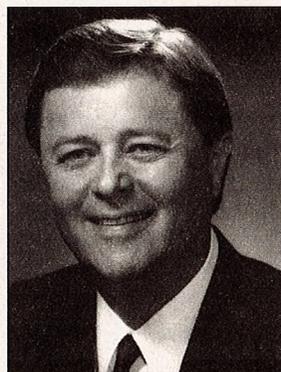
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—Morris H. Chapman
President
Executive Committee
Southern Baptist Convention