

Light

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

MARCH-APRIL, 1996

Has Democracy Had Its Day?



Carl Henry's new book, *Has Democracy Had Its Day?*, seeks to answer the compelling question suggested by this photograph, which adorns the book's cover. This provocative and challenging book is now available from the Christian Life Commission for the introductory price of \$4.95. See pages 7 and 16 for order form and endorsements.

Essay Contest for Youth: 'Citizen Christians'

Young people will have an opportunity to express their views on Christian citizenship through an essay contest sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Students up to age eighteen and not yet graduated from high school may submit an essay of up to 1,000 words on the topic "Citizen Christians: God's Ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5:20).

"Every believer faces the challenge of living out one's faith in a sometimes hostile environment,"

says CLC president Richard Land. "We hope this contest will encourage young people to begin considering the issues they will need to deal with when they reach voting age—and for the rest of their lives."

Entries must be legible—preferably prepared on a typewriter or word processor—and must be the original work of the person submitting them. It is assumed the entrant will be affiliated with a church, though not necessarily a Southern Baptist one. Essays will be evaluated by CLC staff members.

A plaque and a \$50.00 savings bond will be awarded to the first-place winner, and the winning essay will be printed in the July-August issue of *Light*. The runner-up will receive a plaque and a \$25.00 savings bond.

Entries must be postmarked no later than the extended date of May 1, 1996, and mailed to:

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Nashville, TN 37203-3696

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see page 11

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**Christian Life
Commission
of the Southern
Baptist Convention**

901 Commerce, #550
Nashville, TN 37203-3696

*"Helping changed people
change the world"*



A Threat to Democracy?

By Richard D. Land

The *New York Times* has pronounced the public policy advocacy of conservative, evangelical Christians as constituting "a far greater threat to democracy than was presented by communism" (Aug. 29, 1993). The *Times* denounced conservative evangelicals' "insistence that religious values are a legitimate source of moral and political illumination rather than regarding such values as merely private prejudices" (Carl F. H. Henry, *Has Democracy Had Its Day?* p. 52). What have evangelical Christians done to arouse such hostility? All they have done is insist that their beliefs and values have as much right to compete in the public marketplace of ideas as any secular ideas.

When Christians turn to their religious convictions for answers to the moral and spiritual crises afflicting our society, they face harsh criticism. Critics assert that churches should involve themselves only with "spiritual" matters, not public policy issues, and that "getting involved" with political reform violates church-state separation. Such criticisms are terribly wrong.

The Southern Baptists' confession of faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, affirms believers' involvement with the world when it states that "every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society." The confession also says that Christians not only "should oppose, in the spirit of Christ, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice," but "should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love." These *Baptist Faith and Message* statements clarify our *responsibilities* as Christians and our *rights* as citizens.

When we bring our moral and religious convictions and our faith affirmations into the public forum of ideas and involve ourselves in the social and political arena, we are standing solidly within the best of our traditions as Baptists and as Americans. Far too often in recent decades we have allowed misleading applications of church-state separation and religious liberty to inhibit Christian participation in public policy debate.

It is time for Baptists to help America understand our nation's true heritage of religious freedom. In America we believe not in freedom *from* religion, but freedom *for* religion. We are not calling for government sponsorship of religion, but we are insisting that secular social and political elites quit trying to censor religious views from the public discourse or to disqualify Christians from full participation in the nation's public life.

In 1798, John Adams, the nation's second president, said, "We have no government armed in power capable of contending in human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made for a moral and a religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other." Contrary to the *Times'* opinion, it is the narrow, secular biases of the nation's social, political, and media elites that pose a grave threat to American democracy, not evangelicals.

How tragic it would be if, at precisely the moment when people are perhaps desperate enough to pause and listen for a sure and certain Word, Christians were intimidated into silence. They need to hear from Christians that Jesus has a whole message for the whole man—a message of love and justice—which will generate and sustain a life that nourishes the soul, feeds the hungry, treats the sick, instructs the ignorant and liberates the captive.

May God give Christians the grace and power to live that life before a watching world.

Sanctity and Evangelism Spawn 'Pastors for Life' Group

By Dwayne Hastings

There is a stretch of public sidewalk along Laurens Road in downtown Greenville, S.C., upon which certain people are forbidden to stand.

Michael Cloer, pastor of Siloam Baptist Church in Powdersville, S.C., calls the 20-foot strip a "gospel-free" zone. A circuit court judge in Greenville calls the area a bubble zone.

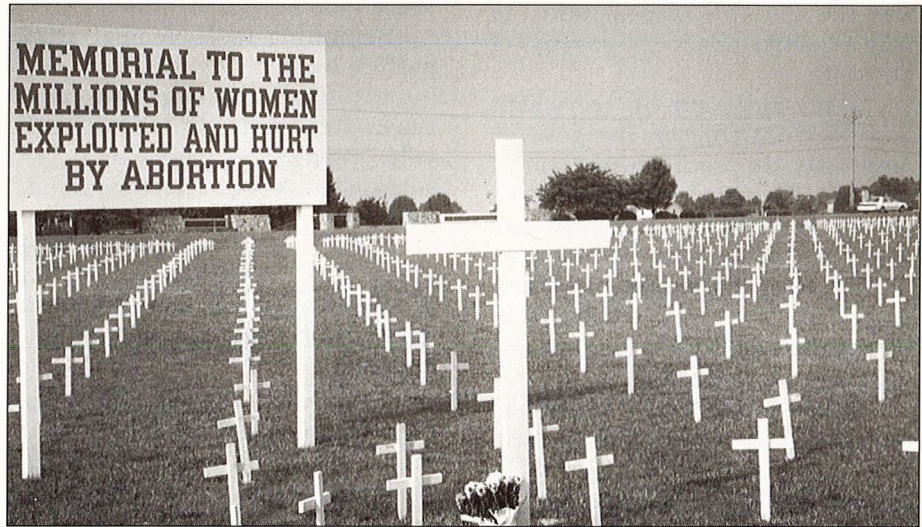
No matter what it's called, the faded copy of the court order posted on the fence outside the Palmetto State Women's Center is clear: Pro-life advocates are prohibited from drawing close to this Greenville abortion clinic. The restricted area includes the sidewalk and even a 10-foot encroachment into the neighboring property.

The temporary restraining order—which remains in effect three years later—has not dampened Cloer's zeal for the rights of the unborn. Instead, he has become a pioneer in the mobilization of pastors across denominational lines in the right-to-life movement in upstate South Carolina, founding the pro-life ministry group, Pastors for Life.

The court order was handed down only days before pro-life advocates came to worship together in Greenville's Memorial Auditorium. Cloer, in addressing that crowd three years ago, sounded a call of peaceful defiance that continues to echo on the streets of Greenville.

"They told us we can't pray in our classrooms and we stopped. They said we can't pray at graduations and we stopped; and they said you can't do it at football games and we stopped. Now they're saying we don't want you to pray in public on sidewalks in front of an abortion center," Cloer recalls telling worshipers in the auditorium back in January 1993.

"But I'm drawing the line at this," he told the 4,000 people gathered in the auditorium for a solemn



assembly, a service of worship, confession, repentance, and commitment based on Joel 2:15-17.

"Our desire in that service was to repent," Cloer recounts. "Instead of pointing a finger at politicians, we wanted to say to God, 'It's our fault that all of this has come upon us.'"

When you meet Cloer, a native of Pickens, S.C., you meet a man who holds forth no pretenses, but exudes a confidence that, even at personal risk, life is worth protecting.

This Southern Baptist pastor is familiar with controversy: First arrested in 1989 for trespassing at a Greenville abortion clinic, Cloer drew the stiffest penalty the law would allow for the misdemeanor charge—30 days in jail. Ironically, the judge who sentenced Cloer was a Southern Baptist.

"The court was sending a clear message to the pro-life community," Cloer says as he recalls his arrest during a 1989 "rescue" at the Greenville Womens Center, a location he sadly notes is "the second largest killing center in South Carolina."

"I was not proud of the fact I was arrested; I was broken. All we were trying to do was ask women not to have an abortion."

So it was not surprising that at the solemn assembly in 1993 Cloer reminded worshipers the Bible says Daniel, even after he was instructed

no longer to pray, continued to pray, as was his custom.

"It's one thing to do it, saying I am going to defy the law, but it's another to do what my custom has been," Cloer declared to the assembly, noting that a day earlier a judge had ordered police to begin making arrests if more than 10 people per block gathered to pray.

Cloer arrived outside the abortion clinic before 6 a.m. the following day. Even at that hour, hundreds of people were already lining the streets. Yet as Cloer stepped onto the sidewalk, a police officer came up to him and told him he was under arrest.

"I hadn't even started praying yet. I had just walked on the sidewalk," Cloer recalls of that day three years ago. "They arrested nearly 600 of us."

The pro-life protests in Greenville that Saturday attracted little attention across the country—a media blackout was in effect, Cloer says, because at that time the city of Greenville was trying to persuade a major international company to locate its first U.S. factory there—but within upstate South Carolina, it was clear God was blessing the area churches' newfound concern for the rights of the unborn.

The year before, Cloer had
(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued from Page 3)

mailed letters to 1,700 pastors in upstate South Carolina, telling them he had come to understand it was the church's responsibility to take an active role in the sanctity of life issue.

"Many in the pro-life movement had been waiting on the government to do something about abortion. They had been hoping the government will halt the decay and penetrate the darkness," Cloer says. "All of that I believe is unbiblical. It is the church's responsibility, and if we don't do it, we can't ask anybody else to step in."

In the letter Cloer explained that his study of Scripture, particularly Jesus' call in Matthew 5 for His followers to be salt and light in a dark world, convinced him that it was the church, not parachurch organizations, that should take the lead in moral issues.

He suggests the presence of parachurch ministries might indicate the local church is not doing its job: "We had been waiting on pro-life organizations to lead the way. Some pastors were involved, but where was the church as a whole?"

The church began talking about abortion in the late 1980s but failed to organize to do something about the problem, Cloer notes.

Eighty-seven pastors responded to Cloer's letter, meeting first in September 1992. "For the first time in this area, I saw Southern Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and eleven other denominations hold hands, get down on their knees, cry together, and pray together.

This meeting was the genesis of "Pastors for Life," a nondenominational fellowship of pastors—"from Catholics to charismatics"—who meet to pray and prepare to lead their churches in pro-life activities.

"We didn't have to come up with an organization," Cloer remarks. "There was one that already existed. It's called the church."

The authority structure is already established within the church, he says. "Pastors for Life" allows the pastor to lead his church as he sees fit.

"The pastors have to be the ones

to lead," he continues, citing 1 Peter 5. "The pastor is to be an example to the flock. I love to preach to my people about soul-winning, but it's useless if I am not a soul-winner."

Beginning in November 1992, pastors led their churches in praying one hour each month at one of the two abortion clinics in Greenville. "Every time a clinic was open, some church was there praying," Cloer says.

Since Pastors for Life was organized, the pro-life community has gained two remarkable footholds in its battle for the unborn in South Carolina.

First, when a beauty salon next door to the Laurens Road clinic closed, the group saw a rare opportunity to locate a crisis pregnancy



Michael Cloer

center adjacent to an abortion clinic. The building was for sale for \$100,000.

"We called for 40 days of prayer. Within that time we had the cash to buy the building," Cloer says.

It wasn't long before a ramshackle house in a pine thicket next to the largest abortion clinic in town went on the market. Church members in the greater Greenville area again wasted little time in pulling together the money to buy that building.

"I don't know of any other city in the nation that has two crisis pregnancy centers right next door to abortion clinics," Cloer smiles. "Unbelievable!"

Many of the women who come to the crisis pregnancy centers turn into the wrong driveway, intending to go to the abortion clinic.

"They walk into the door and say they're here for an abortion. We ask them what counseling they've received and ask them if we can spend a few minutes with them before they go through with the abortion—and that's the end of that," Cloer says. "You can imagine how the abortionists don't want us next door."

Cloer explains the divinely placed crisis pregnancy centers are not just there for crisis counseling. Unlike parachurch organizations, he said the number one task for the Pastors for Life centers is soul-winning.

"So what if we save the baby, and the mother and baby eventually die and go to hell? Our ministry doesn't end at saving the baby's life; it ends at bringing the mother to Christ," Cloer insists. "Saving a life is one thing; saving a soul is another."

The group has estimated the abortion clinic on Laurens Road must abort 30 babies a week to remain financially solvent. The number of abortions appears to have fallen below that number recently, Cloer says, adding that "private contributions from groups such as NOW and Planned Parenthood are keeping them going for now. They know what kind of message shutting down will send."

As intense as Cloer's views are on the rights of the unborn, he says there is no allowance for violence or harassment in the group's efforts, dismissing those who resort to violence as "weirdos who have brought a blemish on the pro-life movement."

Holding aloft his well-worn Bible, Cloer lists three weapons most useful in the battle to close down abortion clinics: Scripture, praise and prayer.

"The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but are mighty through God," Cloer says. "The Bible is a two-edged sword; the Israelites circled the wall praising God and the walls fell; and prayer is always powerful. These are the only weapons we use."

Dwayne Hastings is coordinator of the News and Information Department of Southeastern Baptist Seminary.

Reconciliation Efforts Open Outreach to the Hard-to-Reach

(Second in a series of three)

By A. William Merrell

Evidence of racial animosity can be seen all over the country, causing some to conclude that harmony is impossible and conflict inevitable. Many cultural commentators, conservative and liberal, secular and religious, view this as one of our culture's most intractable and difficult problems.

Even in the face of this pessimism, positive and encouraging advances are being made in race relations in neighborhoods, towns, villages and cities over the nation. Many local churches and individual believers are tackling thorny issues of racial prejudice and reconciliation, confident the solution is personal, not programmatic; spiritual, not political; voluntary, not coercive.

Maranatha Baptist Church in Nashville, Ark., two hours southwest of Little Rock, is one of those churches. Maranatha is a new church start intentionally working to break down racial walls.

Bruce Short is the busy bivocational pastor of Maranatha, teaching school and refereeing NCAA basketball in addition to his pastoral duties. To further his ministerial training, he also attends off-campus classes from Southwestern Seminary.

Short was the thirty-eight-year-old owner of three auto parts stores when he felt the Lord calling him into the ministry. He surrendered to the calling and, not long after, was invited to pastor a church in the area. When a bi-racial couple began to attend the all-white church, prejudice and misunderstanding surfaced. After this episode, Short began to feel the Lord was directing him to develop a church ministry in which racial differences would not be determinative. "Although black and white Christians were together in the workplace, I saw that there was no church in our area, black

or white, where they worshiped together."

At about that time, First Baptist Church in Nashville decided against relocating their church plant, making available some land they had originally planned to use for the purpose. The church missions committee urged the church not to sell it, but to use it for mission expansion. It was located across the road from a multiethnic neighborhood, with no church nearby.

Looking back on those circumstances, Short comments, "It was as though the Lord said, 'I'm ready to

"The Lord has called us to join Him in seeing that His people worship Him together. It is not easy, because people have had long patterns of worshipping separately."

do something, and I'm setting everything up for you to follow me." Following the Lord for Short and the Maranatha Baptist Church meant planting a congregation in which no barriers were erected to keep any believer out, nor to separate some believers from others.

Not everyone was convinced of the need for the new ministry. "Both black and white church leaders asked, 'Why is there a need for a new church here?'" Short recalls, "but we believed that what the Lord was doing was new and different, and required a new start."

Short adds, "The Lord has called us to join Him in seeing that His people worship Him together. It is not easy, because people have had long patterns of worshipping separately. We have no agenda except to minister to all who come thorough the door. We have no goals on racial balance. Whether our church is 10 percent black, or 50-50 balanced, or

90 percent black is not our business. Our goal is to follow the Lord's direction and receive every person the Lord sends to be a part of this church ministry."

Commitment to that goal soon caused the church to be identified as a place where anyone was welcome, and people began to attend who felt they might not be welcome in most churches. As Short put it, "If a person who is different walks into our church, they seem to know they can be accepted here. No one has to convince them they are welcome in this place."

With the coming of these unchurched people, needs surfaced which required development of new and different ministries. One of these is a specifically Christian 12-Step recovery program, through which the church ministers to a growing number of persons trapped in alcoholism.

Racial questions are addressed openly and biblically at Maranatha. When the men of the church began to study the book, *Seven Promises of a Promisekeeper*, consciousness was raised about the necessity of reconciliation between races. "We encourage white believers to acknowledge and turn from the racism and prejudice of their past, and we also address resentment and anger in the hearts of black persons. We've discovered that the anger is there, but that we usually don't develop relationships which permit us to know what others think or feel. One of the most difficult and yet necessary things for us to do is to get below the surface, to develop relationships which are more than superficial."

Asked if he could recommend proactive reconciliation ministry to other pastors, Pastor Short affirms, "I would exhort them to be open to the Lord's leadership and the blessing that comes from Him when we reconcile our differences."

A. William Merrell is vice-president for Convention Relations for the Executive Committee of the SBC.

By Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.

Appearances can be deceptive. Early we learn that all things are not what they seem. The earth appears to be flat. So for many years people mistakenly thought that it was flat when in reality it is a ball. The sun, moon, and stars appear to move around the earth, which appears to be the center of the universe. These appearances are deceptive because of our limited perspective. In reality, the earth is a tiny speck of dust in the great cosmos we now know to be the universe.

This phenomenon also is true on a spiritual level. Spiritual realities are not always what they appear to be. Satan is the great deceiver who often appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-14). What seems to be right and acceptable may actually be a "way" that leads to death and destruction. Thus, we have the warning in Proverbs 14:12 that there is a way that appears to be good, right, and ethically correct which, in fact, is deadly.

No situation from life illustrates this principle better than the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other physical and mind-altering drugs. The use of these substances may appear to produce a "good" effect, a release from the tensions and problems of every-day life. The reality is, however, that their use is addictive, and the end result is destruction and death.

The use of addictive substances always is portrayed as a mark of sophistication and fulfilled pleasure. As Proverbs states, it "seems" right, which is the deception; it only "seems" right from our limited human perspective.

'The ways of death'

(Proverbs 14:12)



**Observe Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Sunday
March 17, 1996**

Smoking is a good example of a deceptive "way." If we could see on the outside of our body the tar, nicotine, and decay caused by the smoke on the inside, perhaps we would recognize the destructiveness and death of this "way."

Smoking is not a good "way" because it contributes to the destruction of human life—our life and the lives of those around us. The attrac-

tive but deceptive "way" of smoking, like all forms of substance abuse, is one of "The ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

Lamar Cooper is vice-president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

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The Culture of Death and the Gospel of Life: An Evangelical Response to *Evangelium Vitae*

By R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

"The twentieth century," declared Pope John Paul II, "will have been an era of massive attacks on life, an endless series of wars and a continual taking of innocent human life." This dark but brutally honest statement lies as the background of *Evangelium Vitae* [*The Gospel of Life*], John Paul's timely confrontation with what he correctly identifies as "the culture of death."

The release of a papal encyclical on the sanctity of human life is not automatically a major news event—at least not in the secular arena. The Pope's opposition to abortion, euthanasia, and other threats to life are not in themselves newsworthy. We expect this of John Paul II, as we would expect the same of any pope.

But John Paul II is not just any pontiff, and *Evangelium Vitae* is no ordinary encyclical. In a very real sense, John Paul II has emerged as the first post-modern pope, a jet-setting patriarch who has seen firsthand the murderous regimes of Hitler and Stalin and the corrosive effects of modern secular philosophies and ideologies. At the same time, he was a major participant in the spirit of *aggiornamento* [theological restatement] at Vatican II. He is a perplexing and complicated figure on the world stage, who is almost universally recognized for courage and conviction.

In *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II unleashed a full-scale assault on the murderous threats to life now so much a part of life in modern Western culture. The encyclical was released from St. Peter's in Rome on March 25, 1995, and it joined two other recent encyclicals, *Centesimus Annus* [1991] and *Veritatis Splendor* [1993] as classic statements of John Paul's mature thought. The encyclical is an important statement, deserving the careful attention of evangelicals as well as Roman Catholics.

The Eclipse of Life

The sanctity of life, argues John Paul, has been eclipsed by modernity's technocratic hedonism. Human lives are terminated in the womb, the neo-natal ward, the nursing home, and the test tube—all in the name of scientific "progress." The Pope identifies this in the modern "tendency to disguise certain crimes against life in its early or final stages by using innocuous medical terms which distract attention from the fact that what is involved is the right to life of an actual human person."

He names these crimes against life as abortion, euthanasia, contraception, artificial reproduction, prenatal diagnosis leading to

The world is in danger of being overcome by a culture of death. We are not confronted with isolated issues, argues the Pope, but with a full-scale diabolical assault upon human life.

eugenic abortion, infanticide, and, in passing references, war and the death penalty. These are, the Pope asserts, a form of warfare the strong have visited upon the weak.

The Pope has repeatedly declared himself on the issue of abortion, but in this context he explicitly condemns the development of pharmaceuticals such as RU-486, the French "abortion pill." As he states: "On this point, scientific research itself seems to be almost exclusively preoccupied with developing products which are ever more simple and effective in suppressing life and which at the same time are capable of removing abor-

tion from any kind of control or social responsibility."

On this point John Paul is certainly correct. The development of the abortion pill would shift the issue of abortion even further from the public mind—and its contorted conscience. Abortion would shift from what its proponents have celebrated as "a matter between a woman and her doctor" to a mere matter between a woman and her medicine cabinet.

From this the Pope moves to contraception, which he rejects as a preventative for abortion. The values inherent in what John Paul labels the "contraceptive mentality" are precisely what lie behind the impulse to abort. Abortion and contraception are, he allows, different evils; yet they share a common hedonistic foundation and an intrinsic separation of sex from procreation.

In a careful argument, the Pope asserts that artificial reproduction techniques, which would seem to be pro-life, "actually open the door to new threats against life." To the older Roman Catholic rejection of such technologies based on their separation of the sex act from procreation is added a new warning that many of these techniques are actually destructive of life. "Spare embryos" and excess "biological material" become the vocabulary of new assaults upon life.

Aware of developments in both the developed and developing nations, John Paul also condemns technologies of prenatal diagnosis which are employed for the purposes of genetic screening and eugenic abortions. He rejects the mentality "which accepts life only under certain conditions and rejects it when it is affected by any limitation, handicap, or illness." Furthermore, abortion and eugenic technologies lead inexorably to infanticide and "a state of barbarism which one hoped had been left behind forever."

Similarly, euthanasia has reemerged accompanied by argu-

ments over both "quality of life" and the economic costs of care: "Thus it is proposed to eliminate malformed babies, the severely handicapped, the disabled, the elderly, especially when they are not self-sufficient, and the terminally ill." Ominously, the Pope also warns against new threats such as the harvesting of organs for transplant "without respecting objective and adequate criteria which verify the death of the donor."

The Culture of Death

A major turning point in human history has occurred, John Paul argues, and the world is in danger of being overcome by a culture of death. Already the death culture has cast its shadow over modern Western civilization. This is the most powerful argument put forth in *Evangelium Vitae*, and it is certainly the issue of greatest controversy.

We are not confronted with isolated issues, argues the Pope, but with a full-scale diabolical assault upon human life. The death culture is armed with technologies of mass annihilation and microscopic manipulation—and it shows no signs of retreat.

Carefully, John Paul argues that a "profound crisis of culture" lies behind these developments. The Pope claims that "there exists in contemporary culture a Promethean attitude which leads people to think that they can control life and death by taking the decisions about them into their own hands." The reality, John Paul insists, "is that the individual is overcome and crushed by a death deprived of any prospect of meaning or hope."

A fascinating historical turn is upon us, John Paul argues, along with a "surprising contradiction." The contradiction is this: The very cultures which asserted human rights are now the enemies of human life. He states: "Precisely in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right of life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment

of birth and the moment of death."

Western civilization is breaking down under the corrosive influence of radical subjectivity and individualism. Freedom is divorced from truth, and all authority above the individual is denied. A condition of moral relativism has resulted. As John Paul describes this condition: "In this way, any reference to common values and to a truth absolutely binding on everyone is lost, and social life ventures onto the shifting sands of complete relativism. At that point, *everything is negotiable, everything is open to bargaining*: even the first of the fundamental rights, the right to life."

Thus, even democracy itself can turn to deny human life in the name of human rights. "Democracy," the Pope suggests, "cannot be idolized to the point of making it a substitute

***Evangelium Vitae
reveals that evangelicals and Roman Catholics may agree on many issues of life and death. At the same time, we continue to differ on basic issues of truth and the gospel.***

for morality or a panacea for immorality." Democracy is a means, and not an end. Democracies are moral to the extent that they conform to moral law, and, by contrast, immoral as they reject that moral law.

An Evangelical Response

How should evangelicals respond to *Evangelium Vitae*? To some extent, this is a new question. In decades past, evangelicals would have taken scant notice of a papal encyclical. Now, the crisis of our culture has produced an altered environment. Evangelicals—holding fast to the sanctity of life—find the

Pope making many arguments heard in evangelical circles, even as liberal Protestantism shouts the chorus of moral relativism.

Evangelium Vitae is, by any measure, a brave and breathtakingly honest statement of moral conviction. In passages confronting the culture of death, the Pope is brilliant, and yet restrained. He is not given to rhetorical excess. His words are carefully measured and well-aimed.

Clearly, evangelicals will resound with the Pope's denunciation of abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, eugenic technologies, and the recklessness of many modern medical procedures. Furthermore, evangelicals should pay close heed to the Pope's condemnation of the culture of death. American evangelicals are too easily seduced by culture, and our ranks are deeply infected with a radical individualism which is foreign to the New Testament and hostile to the genuine gospel.

Fundamentally, evangelicals will join John Paul in his assertion of objective truth and his condemnation of ethical relativism. This is one of the great chasms which divides Western civilization in the throes of a culture war over life and death.

Evangelium Vitae also reminds evangelicals of the powerful character of a sustained moral argument. Evangelicals in general—and Baptists in particular—rightly resist the notion of a magisterium as an authoritative church body, rendering moral judgments which are handed down from on high. Nevertheless, we do see the need for congregations to consider such issues with great moral seriousness and biblical conviction. Beyond this, denominations should, as servants of the churches, declare themselves on these critical issues and provide materials for congregational study and consideration. In this, the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is a worthy model. In recent years, the Christian Life Commission has begun to exert national and international influence on behalf of

(Continued on Page 10)

An Evangelical Response to *Evangelium Vitae*

(Continued from Page 9)

Southern Baptists on these issues of life and death.

Evangelicals will part company with the Pope on some issues of fundamental importance. The encyclical claims the authority of the papacy, the magisterium, tradition, natural law, and Scripture. Of these, evangelicals recognize only the last as authoritative. *Sola Scriptura*, the formal principle of the Reformation, guards evangelicals against the tendency to trust in human authorities. When evangelicals violate this principle, we violate the heart of the Reformation.

The Pope does, after all, claim to hold the keys of the kingdom and to sit in Peter's seat as the vicar of all Christians. Evangelicals categorically reject this claim, even when we may find ourselves in agreement on critical issues in the culture war.

On some of those issues evangelicals will differ with the Pope. At points, the Pope follows the so-called "seamless garment" argument made popular in the United States by the United States Conference of Bishops and voiced by Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago. By natural law argumentation, opposi-

tion to abortion is linked, for instance, to opposition to the death penalty—not a linkage many evangelicals would accept. In biblical terms, the death penalty was intended to *protect* the sanctity of human life by making clear the penalty for murder and violence against life.

Without question, many evangelicals will quickly reject the Pope's customary rejection of contraception. The Pope's argument is, once again, based upon natural law and Catholic tradition. Evangelicals quickly, and correctly, assert that contraception is not addressed as such in Scripture. But this assertion is not sufficient. Evangelicals should be concerned with the "contraceptive mentality" which is so intricately linked to radical individualism and so hostile to the very existence of children. Here, evangelical concern differs from the Pope's focus and argument, however.

The consideration of any papal encyclical unavoidably raises the issue of Roman Catholicism itself—an issue which cannot be discussed thoroughly in this article. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics now find themselves assaulted by a common foe in the culture of death, confront-

ed by a common enemy in the rampage of moral relativism, and linked to common concerns such as abortion, euthanasia, and infanticide. We should be candid in understanding that we find ourselves engaged as awkward allies in this culture war.

Evangelicals cannot bear witness to the sanctity of human life without bearing witness to the gospel itself. This means affirming the material principle of the Reformation as well—*justification by faith*. This is, as Martin Luther stated, the article by which the church stands or falls. The Pope and the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church have officially anathematized and condemned the evangelical understanding of the gospel. *Evangelium Vitae* reveals that evangelicals and Roman Catholics may agree on many issues of life and death, and for that we should be thankful. At the same time, we continue to differ on basic issues of truth and the gospel, and on that we should be honest.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. is president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

'How to Preach' Series of Articles

A new series of articles on how to preach on the critical ethical issues confronting Christians today commences in the next issue of LIGHT. Future issues will include articles by prominent Southern Baptist preachers with suggestions on how to preach on such topics as:

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- **Christian citizenship**
- **Racial reconciliation**
- **Christian sexuality**
- **Sanctity of human life**
- **Abstinence from alcohol**

If you have suggestions either for writers or additional topics, please write or fax them to Dr. Richard D. Land at the Christian Life Commission office in Nashville.

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From Tome to Tome and Womb to Tomb

By C. Ben Mitchell

I bore easily—which means I am also distracted easily. While I try to follow Carl F. H. Henry's ideal of reading one book in my discipline per week, I seldom begin reading a volume and stick with it to the end. Like many others, I pick up a book, scan its contents, get an idea of where it's going, and put it down. I repeat this several times until I find a volume that really piques my interest. Later, when I am working on a particular project, I may go back and finish reading one of the volumes I scanned earlier. I am not recommending this procedure, but it is what I do.

Over the past few years, following this arguably helter-skelter approach, I have read a number of volumes I keep coming back to. Some of them are relatively new; some of them are not. Nevertheless, I hope this brief survey will tease you enough to make you want to read some of the volumes I have found especially helpful in sorting out the issues of life and death, science and theology, public life and Christian citizenship.

Francis J. Beckwith is a young Christian philosopher who teaches at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His *Politically Correct Death: Answering the Arguments for Abortion Rights* (Baker, 1993) is a veritable encyclopedia of great arguments against abortion. Since he teaches in the secular academy, Beckwith has had to muster creditable philosophical arguments for the sanctity of human life. Because he is a Christian, he also knows the Bible offers a unique perspective on the debate. This volume is clearly written, logically organized, rigorously argued, and simply the best compendium on abortion available. His desire was to produce a volume which would "provide a defense of the pro-life position that will address both the concerns of scholars and the rhetoric that predominates the popular debate." He succeeds most admirably.

At the other end of life, John F.

Kilner has written a critically important volume in *Life on the Line: Ethics, Aging, Ending Patients' Lives, and Allocating Vital Resources* (Eerdmans, 1992). Kilner directs the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, housed at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The advantage of Kilner's book over others is that he offers a comprehensive biblical view of life and death decision-making. Every decision in bioethics, Kilner contends, must be God-centered, reality-bound, and love-impelled. Kilner works this model out in extravagant detail throughout the bulk of the volume. His view of bioethics prescribes not only that we ought not legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide, but that we have important moral obligations to care for the elderly. Age-based rationing of health care is contrary to the unique dignity of human life. Those who are wrestling with end-of-life decisions will find a great deal of help in Kilner's volume.

Behind the human-life debate lurks a way of understanding the universe which is at once both insufficient and self-defeating. Naturalistic materialism is "the established religious philosophy of America," according to University of California, Berkeley, professor Philip E. Johnson. In *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law, & Education* (IVP, 1995), Johnson exposes the underlying philosophy which yields Darwinian evolution. For naturalists, "nature is a permanently closed system of material causes and effects that can never be influenced by anything outside itself." A transcendent God and supernaturalism can find no home in a naturalistic world view.

Reason in the Balance is so compellingly argued that the "emperor" is bound to feel a discomforting breeze. This is a must-read, especially for parents of children in public schools and for students heading off to college. But it's challenging enough to give to your favorite professor.

Speaking of professors, Barry Alan Shain, assistant professor of political science at Colgate University, has corrected the historical record in *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton, 1995). According to the popular view, the American experiment entails the belief that the government exists for the purpose of permitting singular, solitary, individuals to serve his or her own needs and to attain personal fulfillment. Shain demonstrates through dense argument and excruciatingly careful historical analysis that crass individualism was anything but what the founders of the Republic had in mind.

Shain builds the case against individualism by citing the primary sources: Revolutionary War-era political pamphlets, sermons, public documents, and newspaper editorials. Liberty, as construed by the founders, was the freedom to order one's life according to the ethical standards revealed in Scripture and confirmed by reason. Life could only be lived well in the context of the family, the church, and the community.

Finally, *One By One From the Inside Out: Essays and Reviews on Race and Responsibility in America* (Free Press, 1995) traces the contours of explosive race relations in American life. Its author, Glenn C. Loury, is professor of economics at Boston University. Interestingly, Loury has made his students read Chuck Colson's *Born Again* as an exploration of links between personal spiritual commitment and the ethics of public service. Our civil discussions about race would be considerably less volatile were we all to read and heed Loury's insights. The epilogue contains his poignant Christian testimony.

C. Ben Mitchell is a consultant for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Hard Facts About Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

ALCOHOL

- There are 15.3 million people in the United States which meet the criteria for either alcohol abuse or alcoholism.

—*Monday Morning Report*, 1994

- Alcohol consumption, misuse, and its consequences have been estimated to cost our society \$86 billion each year.

—U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services, 1993

- Alcohol plays a major role in suicides, fires, gunshot wounds, stabbings, falls, drownings, domestic violence, pedestrian injuries, and motor vehicle crashes. Nearly half of all trauma beds are occupied by patients who were injured while under the influence of alcohol.

—*Journal of the American
Medical Association*, 1995

- The Commission on Substance Abuse at Colleges and Universities reported in 1994 that 95 percent of violent crimes on campuses and 40 percent of academic problems are alcohol-related.

—*The Washington Post*, 1995

- The National Highway Safety Administration reported that 42 percent—or 16,884—of the 40,200 traffic deaths recorded in 1994 were influenced by alcohol.

—*Nashville Banner*, 1995

DRUGS

- “People are shocked to learn that between 70 and 80 percent of the demand [for cocaine] comes from white, mostly suburban users. Without their demand, there would be no cocaine cartels.”

—attorney Tony Vick,
Richmond Times-Dispatch, 1995

- Drug addiction causes damage in the American workplace. Seventy-five percent of regular drug users are employed, but are 33 percent less productive than their nonabusing colleagues and incur 300 percent higher medical costs and benefits.

—*Wall Street Journal*, 1995

- A 1994 National Institute of Justice survey found that arrests for drug possession and sales are the most frequently reported contributing factors to crowded jail conditions nationwide.

—Center for Substance Abuse Research, 1995

- A 1991 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey of U.S. prisons found that many inmates admitted they committed crimes to buy drugs: 27 percent of robbers, 30 percent of burglars, and 5 percent of convicted murderers.

—*Chicago Tribune*, 1995

- Nearly 300,000 babies are born each year to drug-addicted women.

—*USA Today*, 1994

SMOKING

- In a 1993 CDC poll of students, one in four white male high schoolers admitted using smokeless tobacco within the last thirty days.

—*The Washington Post*, 1995

- Cigarette ad spending totaled \$442 million in 1994, up 34 percent from 1993. Marlboro, the world's largest cigarette brand, was supported by \$96 million in ad spending in 1994, up 27 percent from 1993.

—*USA Today*, 1995

- The average teenage smoker starts at age 14 1/2 and is a daily smoker by age 18.

—*The Atlanta Journal*, 1995

- The state government of Massachusetts spends an estimated \$200 million a year caring for poor people with smoking-related diseases.

—*The Boston Globe*, 1995

- Of the 30 million adults who die every year worldwide, 3 million die from smoking-related illnesses.

—*The Boston Globe*, 1995

- Smoking is the single greatest preventable cause of death, killing 419,000 Americans annually, more than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, murders, suicides, illegal drugs, and fires combined.

—*The Atlanta Journal*, 1995

- Studies estimate that secondhand smoke may cause 30,000 to 50,000 non-smokers to die each year from heart disease, compared to 3,000 similar deaths from lung cancer.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 1995

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data show that 3,000 teenagers become regular smokers every day and that almost 1,000 of them eventually will die of diseases caused by smoking.

—*USA Today*, 1995

Light from the Capital

CLC supports inclusion of religious schools in program

The Christian Life Commission has joined in a brief supporting the inclusion of religious schools in an educational choice program when other private schools are participants.

In the case, *Thompson v. Jackson*, before the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the brief calls for the justices to uphold an educational choice program in Milwaukee, Wis., which was amended to include private, religious schools.

Initiated in 1990, the original Milwaukee Parental Choice Program permitted parents to use public money to pay for their children's tuition only at nonreligious, private schools. Gov. Tommy Thompson proposed inclusion of religious schools in the program, and the state legislature approved it last year.

People for the American Way, the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association and parents of public school students filed suit, charging the inclusion of religious schools is an establishment of religion. A court granted an injunction, blocking the expansion of the program.

The Christian Legal Society brief, signed onto by the National Association of Evangelicals and the CLC, argues the exclusion of religious schools would be a violation of the free exercise of religion.

"This case is not about tuition tax credits and vouchers," said Richard Land, the CLC's president. "It is about religious freedom and government discrimination against religion."

"This case does not say that the government must or should offer vouchers to parents who choose alternative schools for their children. It does say that if the government chooses to offer such vouchers, it must not and cannot

discriminate against religious schools as opposed to other private schools."

Neither the U.S. Constitution nor the Wisconsin Constitution requires the "discriminatory denial of tuition benefits to parents who choose religious education," the CLS/NAE/CLC brief says.

"The U.S. Supreme Court has made clear that programs such as this one, which provide benefits to citizens on a religion-neutral basis for use at a wide range of schools and which create no incentive to choose religious schools over other kinds, do not violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause," the brief says.

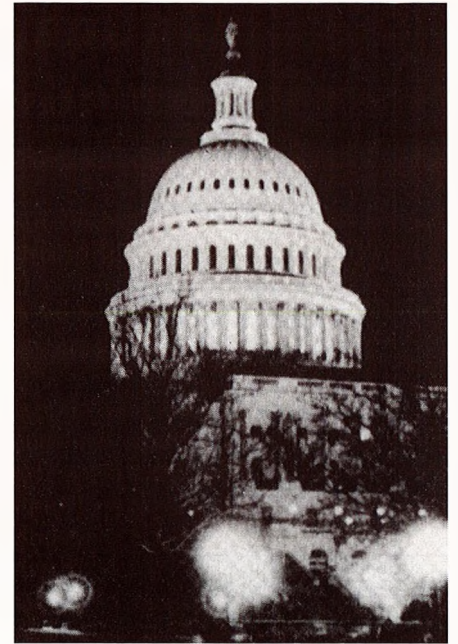
"The parents are the payee of the check; they direct where it will be mailed and endorse it to the school; in short, the decision where to use the money is theirs."

The inclusion of religious schools in the program "creates no incentive for parents to choose religious education and therefore comports with anti-establishment principles," the brief argues. The exclusion of such schools "would amount to impermissible government interference in the religious lives of the people," the brief says.

"It is beyond doubt that for a state to withhold benefits solely because of a citizen's religious status or activity imposes an unconstitutional burden on the free exercise of religion, just as much as does affirmative prohibition or regulation of the activity."

State aid provided to the Milwaukee public schools for the 1995-96 school year is \$3,667 per student. If the amended choice program had been implemented, participating private schools would have received up to that amount for each student who was in the program for the entire year.

Of the 122 private schools which would have been eligible to participate this year in the amended program, eighty-nine are religious.



Under the legislation amending the program, students at sectarian schools may opt out of religious activities with the consent of their parents.

— Tom Strode

Survey: Media reports biased against pro-lifers

A recent study demonstrates what many pro-life Americans long have believed: The national news media provide distorted coverage of the abortion issue, resulting in inaccurate and harmful portrayals of the pro-life movement.

The study, released January 18 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-life Activities, found:

- The news media gave inflammatory labels to pro-life politicians, while calling politicians who support abortion on demand "moderate."
- The news media portrayed the pro-life movement as almost totally within the Republican Party.
- The news media largely ignored or provided negative coverage of the more than 3,500 crisis pregnancy centers in the country.
- The news media presented abundant coverage of violence by anti-abortion protesters, while coverage of violence by abortion

advocates and abortion doctors was nearly nonexistent.

The study by the Media Research Center examined three major newspapers (*The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *The Washington Post*), three major news magazines (*Newsweek*, *Time* and *U.S. News and World Report*), Associated Press and news programs on four networks (ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC). A portion of the study was from 1994 to 1995, while another part was from 1992 to 1995.

One portion of the study found Republicans who support abortion rights were described as "moderate" in 116 stories, while pro-life Republicans were described in terms such as "far right," "hard right" or "extreme right" in thirty-seven reports. Terms for abortion advocates such as "far left" or "hard left" were never used.

No pro-life incumbent lost in the 1994 elections, but reporters predicted in forty-eight stories such advocacy would harm Republicans.

Only one article said the pro-life movement was a diverse mixture of political persuasions, races and religious beliefs. No pro-life Democrat appeared as a "talking head" in an abortion report on television.

Only sixteen reports on crisis pregnancy centers were filed in nearly four years. Fourteen of those were negative.

In the print media, the murders at abortion clinics by Michael Griffin, Paul Hill and John Salvi resulted in more than 1,100 articles. In eleven selected cases of violence by abortion advocates, the same outlets produced fifty-nine articles. Six incidents of death or disfigurement because of botched abortions resulted in fifty-three articles in the print media.

—Tom Strode

Gambling panel bill awaits floor action

The House of Representatives Judiciary Committee has approved a bill to establish a commission to study the impact of gambling in the United States.

Supporters are hopeful there will be House floor action this year.

The November 8 voice vote by committee members provided a victory in an attempt to form a panel which would compile information on gambling's effects on families, economics, crime and individuals. In a September 26 letter to the thirty-five members of the Judiciary Committee, Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry and Christian Life Commission President Richard Land had urged them to approve the bill.

The National Gambling Impact and Policy Commission Act, H.R. 497, would establish a panel of three members appointed by the President, three by the Senate

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President, three by the Senate majority leader and three by the speaker of the House. Rep. Frank Wolf, R.-Va., chief sponsor of the bill, has said he would like another panel member to be a governor from a state which has legalized gambling.

Wolf has said he introduced the bill because he does not "believe many Americans fully understand the consequences of legalized gambling."

The commission, Wolf said, should review the cost and effectiveness of federal and state regulations, gambling's impact on other businesses, the influence of gambling promoters on the development of policies regulating gaming, the relationship between gambling and crime, teenage gambling and the effect of pathological gambling on individuals, families and social institutions.

The commission also should propose whether gaming operations on Indian lands should be regulated by the states, not just the federal government, he said.

The panel should be chosen in a balanced manner and should provide centralized data for public officials and citizens, Wolf has said.

Sen. Paul Simon, D.-Ill., has introduced a similar bill, S. 704, in the other chamber.

—Tom Strode

Join CLC on-line

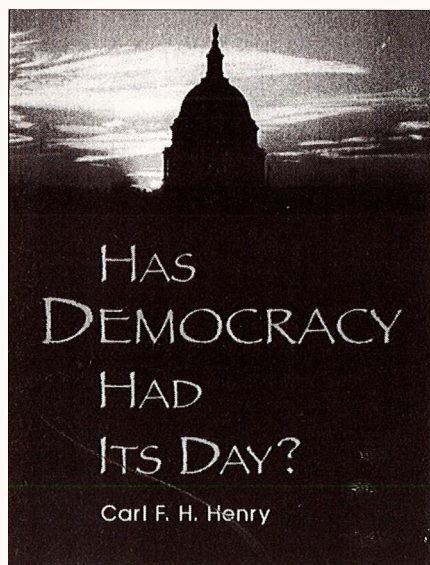
Subscribers to SBCNet, the Southern Baptist Convention's data communications network, may receive information on ethics and religious liberty issues from the Christian Life Commission and also "talk" with CLC staff members.

The CLC posts on a regular basis a number of items in the General Ministry B Forum of SBCNet, which is found on CompuServe, the computer on-line service. These include alerts about pending federal legislation, statements from news conferences, commentaries, as well as articles from its regular publications, *Light* and *Salt*. In addition to accessing such items in the CLC library of the B Forum, subscribers may communicate with CLC staff in the B Forum message section.

Free SBCNet membership kits are distributed by the Baptist Sunday School Board. They are available in DOS, Macintosh and Windows versions and may be ordered by calling 1-800-325-7749.

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