

Light

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

MAY-JUNE, 1996

Seminar speakers warn: Beware of wrong allegiances in public arena

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The church needs to influence American public life in a righteous manner, but Christians need to beware of offering unwavering support to any politician or political party in the process, speakers warned frequently at the Christian Life Commission's national seminar March 4-6.

The theme of the CLC's 29th annual seminar, which was held at a Capitol Hill hotel, was "Christians in the Public Square: Faith in Practice?" The speakers—who included leaders of public policy advocacy organizations, Southern Baptist pastors and seminary ethics professors—exhorted those in attendance to live out a biblical faith in the public arena while keeping their priorities in line.

"We must never sell the birthright of our second birth to any political leader, any human movement, to any political party," said Richard Land, the CLC's president. "Our loyalty and allegiance belong to Jesus Christ."

Southern Baptist pastors should determine their positions on moral issues by God's Word and not "hitch [their] pulpit to a political candidate's star" or take a position because of its popularity among members of a group with which they want to be identified, said

Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.

"If it's right, it's biblically right. If it's wrong, it's biblically wrong," Fuller said. "Moral issues for God's people are not political credentials and passkeys; they are moral issues."

The failure of most Christians in pre-World War II Germany to practice their faith properly should be a lesson to believers today. The church's inadequate theology led to the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and eventually to the Holocaust, said David Gushee, professor of ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "They failed to embrace important biblical, moral norms," said Gushee.

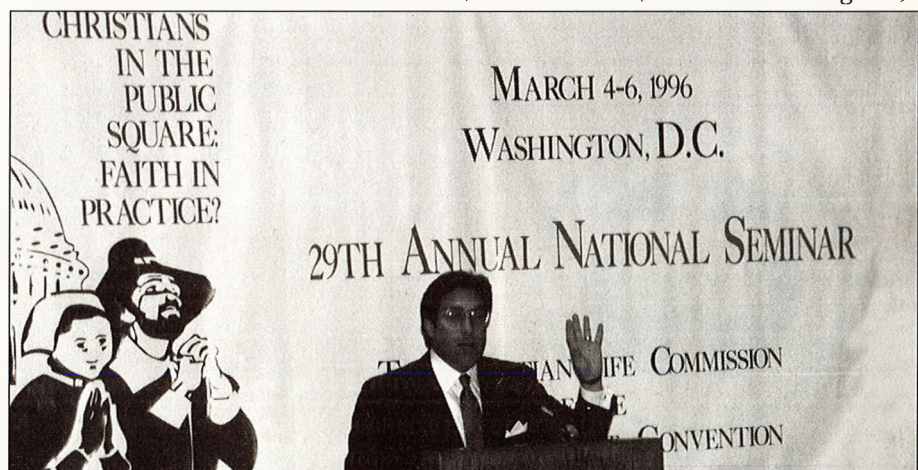
"Too frequently we pick a cluster of values and baptize them as Christian. We are especially enthusiastic about those who skillfully baptize these values in a Christian vocabulary. Then we offer these politicians our uncritical and unquestioning support."

Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, applied such a warning to the 1996 presidential race.

"We ought to stand and call [a candidate] to task, even if inadvertently it will help a President that many of us don't like," Bauer said.

"I don't think we should get into the business of picking the lesser of two evils. We need to hold out a


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Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice

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*"Helping changed people
change the world"*



Persecution of Christians*

By Richard D. Land

The persecution of Christians in various parts of the world has not been a high-profile item on America's agenda. There are several possible reasons for this oversight. First, too often people in the West think of Christians as persecutors, rather than the persecuted. Second, an increasingly secularized West's leadership elites tend to be indifferent, and often uncomprehending, of a spiritual world view which endures persecution and death for the sake of "belief." Third, the silence of the various Christian communities in the West has contributed to the neglect of this issue.

I am grateful that this tragic neglect is ending with startling rapidity. The conference on "Global Persecution of Christians," sponsored by the Puebla Program on Religious Freedom and held on January 23, 1996, here in Washington, was a long-needed "wake-up" call for many in the American faith community. Many had their eyes opened in a new way to both the savagery and the extent of the persecution of fellow Christian believers in various parts of the world, most significantly in Islamic countries such as the Sudan and Saudi Arabia and Communist regimes such as Cuba, China and Vietnam.

There was virtual unanimity of support from the conference participants for the "Statement of Conscience of the National Association of Evangelicals Concerning Worldwide Religious Persecution." The NAE, which represents tens of millions of evangelical Christians in America, has produced a statement of conscience which outlines the facts of such persecution, states the principles of opposition against such persecution, and issues a call for actions which would directly address such persecution.

I want to compliment Stephen Rosenfeld of *The Washington Post* ("Human Rights for Christians, Too," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 1996) for lending his influential forum and powerful voice to this issue. Mr. Rosenfeld is absolutely right when he writes that "Politically as citizens and objectively in terms of the pain of foreign brothers, the Christian community has right and reason to be heard. The effort will save lives. It will also complicate the conduct of foreign policy."

On the day Mr. Rosenfeld's analysis appeared, the Executive Council of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church joined the group chorus of resolve on this issue by expressing "its support in principle of the Statement of Conscience concerning worldwide religious persecution in support of religious liberty as authored by the National Association of Evangelicals."

The 15.6-million-member Southern Baptist Convention had already passed overwhelmingly a resolution "On Religious Liberty and World Evangelization" at its convention in Atlanta in June, 1995. The resolution expresses "support for all peoples suffering denial of religious liberty, but especially for those who are of the household of faith, and even more particularly for those who share Baptist convictions and commitments." The resolution further calls upon my agency as well as others "to seek ways to represent even more effectively the concerns of this Convention to various government, diplomatic, and religious leaders at home and abroad." This testimony is at least partly an attempt to respond to that challenge issued by the Southern Baptist Convention.

In addition, Pope John Paul II has spoken out yet again recently against the persecution of Christians in his address to the Vatican diplomatic corps on January 13, 1996. In that speech, the Pope raised the issue of religious persecution in some Islamic countries as well as China and Vietnam, as

*Slightly abridged text of Dr. Land's testimony before a subcommittee of the U. S. House Committee on International Relations, Feb. 15, 1996. (Continued on Page 3)

Land's testimony on persecution

places where persecution of Christians is presently being perpetrated. He decried such abuses as "an intolerable and unjustifiable violation not only of all the norms of current international law, but of the most fundamental human freedom, that of practicing one's faith openly, which for human beings is their reason for living."

When Episcopalians, Evangelicals, Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics are all voicing grave concerns over the persecution of Christians in other countries, "critical mass" has been reached. I believe we are witnessing the beginnings of a broad-based movement which will insist that the U.S. government take serious and important steps to use its influence to persuade the offending foreign governments to stop these atrocities.

Let me be clear that we are not insisting that the U. S. government seek to hold the entire world to the pristine standard of the U. S. Constitution's First Amendment's religious liberty rights and guarantees, as desirable and as beneficial to humankind as we believe that would be. We *are* insisting that basic human rights be recognized. These persecutions of Christians are clear and unacceptable violations of the UN's 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (cf. particularly Articles 2 and 18). The international family of nations has agreed that all human beings have the inherent "right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

The persecutions are real, and they are widespread. As our Southern Baptist Convention resolution notes, countries as diverse and far-flung as Bulgaria, Russia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Cuba, Romania, India and China have well-documented and systemic patterns of persecuting Christians.

A focused campaign against these persecutions supported by a committed domestic constituency (such as sensitized and informed American Christians) can, and we believe will, have tremendous and

far-reaching results. The inspiring paradigm of the plight of Soviet Jewry and the tremendous impact that the American Jewish community was able to achieve by galvanizing the will and determination of the American people is the best argument both for the ability to make a life-changing difference and for the fact that the efforts achieved can be far-reaching.

The American campaign on behalf of Soviet Jews helped to seal the fate of Soviet repression in its far-flung empire. We believe a campaign to use American governmental influence to stop the persecution of Christians may well have similarly dramatic results. Evangelicals and Catholics are being persecuted in



Dr. Land testifying Feb. 15

many of these countries by those who are seeking to hold back the 21st century by using the repressive methods which have made the 20th century's history the bloodiest in terms of human beings slaughtered. Christians are threats to the anti-democratic forces which oppose modernity, and if the Western secular elites do not understand this, make no mistake, the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban commissars and the Islamic ayatollahs do.

Further, if the U. S. government makes the price for persecuting Christians (usually the most vulnerable people in these societies) unacceptable, it strengthens the moderate Islamic elements in their attempts to resist the persecution perpetrated by Islamic radicals. Clearly, the United States govern-

ment has been woefully negligent in dealing with the issue of the persecution of Christians around the world. This issue has *not* occupied a significant place in American foreign policy. That must change.

There are several steps the Clinton administration should take to rectify this situation. First, the President should deliver a hard-hitting major policy address making it clear that governments seeking to be on favorable terms with the U.S. must not persecute Christian minorities. Second, the President should appoint a high-level "Special Advisor to the President for Religious Liberty" who would have broad-based authority to investigate, monitor, and report to the President the persecutions which occur and what the various agencies of the U. S. government such as the State Department and the Justice Department are, or are not, doing about it. Such an advisor should be someone who has the full confidence of the American religious community.

In addition, we would fully commend to your committee and the Congress, as well as to the President, the entirety of the "Call to Action" of the National Association of Evangelicals' *Statement of Conscience*. I would urge the Congress to take a hard look at the NAE's call to action and to see what parts (such as immigration service indifference, special trade status, foreign aid, State Department reporting on religious persecution, etc.) could be embodied in legislation.

There are some examples of the State Department's woeful and callous indifference to the plight of persecuted Christians which need to be mentioned specifically. They are illustrative in terms of the State Department's failures.

1. The U. S. ambassador to China, Jim Sasser, at a meeting with NGOs in Washington, D.C., on January 24, 1996 indicated that he was not aware of the Protestant Evangelical house-church movement in China—perhaps the largest Evangelical movement in the

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(Continued from Page 3)

world—much less of the torture and imprisonment of its members. It is right for the ambassador to be briefed on the persecution of Buddhists in Tibet and the massive violations of women's rights in the People's Republic, but it is unforgivable that in the many months of briefings given him by the State Department that they did not brief him on the persecutions of a movement that may number 80 million people in China. We believe the ambassador should be recalled until such time as he can be fully briefed on the extent of the persecution of Christians in China. Also there should be an investigation as to who was responsible for his background preparation and why they could be so insensitive to the persecution of millions of people.

2. The Vietnamese government continues to this present moment to persecute Christians. And yet, when our government was negotiating with Vietnam over our government's recognition of that country, this issue was not even "on the table." In fact, at the very moment the U. S. granted much-coveted full diplomatic recognition to Vietnam, that country embarked on a campaign to intimidate and suppress Christian worship. A full-fledged investigation should be launched as to why the State Department did not make the cessation of religious persecution a prerequisite for recognition.

3. The U. S. Attorney General should issue immediately a Bulletin to INS hearing officers acknowledging mounting anti-Christian persecution in the world and direct such officers to process the claims of escapees from such persecutions with priority and diligence. What amounts to an anti-Christian bias in U. S. government circles prevents Christians from escaping torture by fleeing to the United States. An Ethiopian pastor arrested and tortured 25 times was told by his lawyer that he had little chance of gaining asylum in the U.S. because Christian claims of persecution were not taken seriously.

4. The head of the U. S. Delegation

to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations should give a major address at the Commission's annual meeting in March on Christian persecution and other examples of religious intolerance under the agenda item "Religious Intolerance." The U. S. head of delegation has failed to address religious intolerance at the Commission for the past two years of her tenure.

5. There should be a full investigation and report to determine who at the State Department was responsible for advising participants not to carry Bibles or religious literature with them to the U. N. Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing last fall. It was widely reported in the press that Georgia A. Rogers, the State Department's director of consular affairs, advised conference atten-

Governments, like children, often do not what you expect, but what you are prepared to inspect. We expect our government to insist that nations who want to be in good relation with us cease and desist from persecuting Christians.

dees, "You may be thinking of taking a lot of Bibles. That is not a good idea. They don't like that." It is shameful that the U. S. capitulated to China's demand that participants limit their own religious freedoms. This should never occur again at any future international conference—especially one on human rights—that the U. S. helps fund and attends. The U. S. should have insisted that another forum site be found if China could not tolerate the religious rights of the UN participants.

6. There should be a full report and investigation into reports that the U. S. Consulate in Jeddah has bowed to Saudi government demands to end Christian worship services for U. S. personnel and their dependents on consulate

grounds. It had long been the practice that such services were held, and they ceased sometime after March, 1994. Here we seem to have a case of American citizens' First Amendment rights being abrogated on American property in acquiescence to the demands of a repressive Saudi regime.

Traditionally, the role of our embassies in foreign lands has been not only to represent the American government, but to symbolize American values. It seems that at least in regard to persecution of Christians, often the State Department has been in the posture of abject surrender to the most repressive of regimes which have denied fundamental American values of freedom from religious persecution.

The question of whether to grant Most Favored Nation trade privileges for Vietnam will be certain to come up later this year for the first time, and Most Favored Nation status for China will be up for renewal in May. We urge the U. S. government to take a hard look at U. S. policy with regard to these and other nations in the context of these countries' persecution of Christians. Also of extreme relevance in this regard will be China's efforts to gain entry into the World Trade Organization.

We are told that the 21st century will be the "Pacific Century." What kind of century will it be? America has great power and influence. Such power contains responsibilities as well as privilege. We must do all we can to influence the Asian powers of the future to recognize the basic human rights of their citizens, including Christians.

Experience tells us that governments, like children, often do not what you expect, but what you are prepared to inspect. We expect our government to insist that nations who want to be in good relation with us cease and desist from persecuting Christians. We will be inspecting whether they do so. A foreign policy that denies our basic values and seeks only to meet the requirements of commerce and business is, and will always remain, totally unacceptable.

RU-486 boycott at second level

By C. Ben Mitchell

In an effort to stop the manufacture and sale of RU-486, a targeted consumer boycott has been announced.

More than a year ago, the Christian Life Commission, along with other pro-life and pro-family groups, announced a consumer boycott on products manufactured by Hoechst Roussel, the makers of the abortion pill, RU-486. Since that time, Hoechst has merged with Marion Merrell Dow, to become a major global pharmaceutical manufacturer.

Hoechst Roussel's products, while many, were not widely used drugs—at least relatively speaking. But the new company, Hoechst Marion Roussel (HMR), has a number of blockbuster drugs to its name.

HMR is a worldwide company that directly manufactures RU-486 in France, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Concentrating a boycott on some of these blockbuster drugs is more likely to impact Hoechst Marion Roussel than spreading the boycott over hundreds of drugs which have limited sales.

Those who are prescribed HMR drugs can always ask their physician or pharmacists for substitute drugs which may be just as safe and effective as HMR's product line.

Boycotting goods and services can have important effects on individuals and manufacturers.

First, refusing to buy goods or services which violate one's conscience serves to strengthen Christian conviction and help our consciences remain clear. We should boycott certain things purely out of Christian conviction, whether anyone else does so or not. We should write manufacturers or businesses, informing

In order for a boycott to be effective, all of us must both (1) refuse to buy goods and services and (2) let manufacturers, physicians, and others know the reason we do not want those goods and services.

them of the reasons we refuse to buy their products or use their services.

Second, boycotts serve to unify our voice in the public square. Clearly, the more individuals and groups who participate in a boycott, the "louder" our protest becomes. However, if we boycott too often, the impact of our boycotts can be lessened. Because participation in too many con-

sumer boycotts may have the effect of diminishing our voices, we should pick and choose our boycotts carefully. Furthermore, in order for a boycott to be effective, *all of us* must both (1) refuse to buy goods and services and (2) let manufacturers, physicians, and others know the reason we do not want those goods and services.

We would, therefore, urge Southern Baptists and other pro-life groups to participate in a boycott of HMR's products. And, we further encourage that we inform our physicians and druggists of the reason for the boycott.

The objectives in the consumer boycott are (1) to encourage HMR to get out of the abortion drug business; (2) to encourage HMR to withdraw RU-486 from the United States; and (3) to discourage any U.S. drug company from manufacturing and distributing abortifacient drugs in this country.

We have produced below a proposed list of products to be boycotted. The first two on the list are widely used and were originally made by Marion Merrell Dow. Cardizem, a calcium channel blocker, sold more than \$993 million worth in 1994, and Seldane, an antihistamine, \$698 million.

C. Ben Mitchell is a consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Revised Consumer Boycott List

Prescription Drug	\$ Sales in 1994	Use	Substitute
Cardizen	\$993 million	calcium channel blocker	generics available
Seldane	\$698 million	antihistamine	Claritin or Hismanal
Claforan	\$380 million	antibiotic	substitutes available
Lasix	\$250 million	diuretic	generics available
DiaBeta	\$220 million	diabetes	Micronase, generics
Nicoderm		smoking cessation	Habitrol patch, Nicotrol, Pro-Step

By Michael K. Whitehead

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

"America faces a crisis of moral authority," says Charles Colson, a Southern Baptist who directs Prison Fellowship. "Sixty-seven percent of the American people said in one recent poll there is no such thing as truth. Seventy percent said there are no moral absolutes. Relativism pervades our culture. Every man does what is right in his own eyes. And they call this freedom."

"There has been a moral consensus over the centuries that has guided how people behave, without which law becomes ineffective. Then you have to enforce order at the point of a bayonet. And the danger is that, in an era of moral nihilism, when we have eliminated moral values, and we think we are living a tolerant, enlightened, autonomous life, we are really preparing ourselves for the concentration camps" (Citizen Christian video, CLC, 1994).

American Christians need the "perfect law of liberty." The apostle James compares it to a mirror, into which a man glances. Imagine that the man sees food between his teeth, a blob of gravy on his necktie, and his shirttail protruding from his zipper. Yet after a glance in the mirror, the man walks away, doing nothing about his disheveled appearance. Why did he even bother to look in the mirror, you ask. "I was just curious," he answers. "But ain't nobody going to tell me how to dress." Call this the perverted law of liberty.

James contrasts this with the spiritually wise man: "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer,

'The perfect law of liberty'

(James 1:25)



Observe Religious Liberty Sunday
June 2, 1996

this man shall be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25, NASB).

God's law is like a looking glass into the character of God and the nature of man. Its purpose is not to satisfy our curiosity, but to change our lives. The Bible says that God's law is like a "tutor" (Gal. 3:24) to lead a man to Christ. Man must receive Christ freely and individually, without ecclesiastical intermediaries or governmental intermeddlers. Even civil law is like an x-ray machine, whose function is not to heal the broken bone, but to reveal that a bone is broken. The x-ray gives freedom to get the treatment I need, not the license to live however I want. Proper

healing is possible because I get a proper view of the break and then act upon it.

Celebrate religious liberty by meditating intently and continually on the "perfect law," and then by doing what God says to do, in your prayer closet, in your home, at school, and in the public square. Vote and work for laws and public policies which respect the perfect moral law, and which can "secure the blessings of liberty," especially religious liberty, "to ourselves and our posterity," as the Constitution says.

Michael K. Whitehead is vice president of business and finance at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

By James A. Smith

As our nation looks forward to another national election this fall, we as believers ought to consider how God would have us exercise our citizenship rights and responsibilities. Our Father is concerned about all aspects of our lives, and His Word provides us with principles which give us direction, including the manner in which we vote.

Peter provides a succinct model when he proclaims "Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17). Jesus taught the same principle in the Gospels when He instructed His disciples to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:25, NKJV).

Our nation was founded on the revolutionary idea: "We the people . . ." This concept is expressed in the republican form of government in which citizens elect leaders to represent the people. In a sense, the people are "king" in our democratic system. The way Christians "honour the king" in America is to be educated, engaged, and participating citizens. In other words, first we must vote.

However, as followers of Christ, we exercise our citizenship in light of our fear of God. Peter provides instruction on how we are to fear God. "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God" (1 Peter 2:16, NASB). Our right to vote comes with the Christian responsibility to use this right in a manner which will please and honor God.

We should not cast a ballot based on personal preferences such as political affiliation, economic status, regional pride, or denominational loyalty. We should consider voting to be a serious, and properly understood, a spiritual matter. It should be bathed in prayer and careful

'Fear God. Honour the king.'

(1 Peter 2:17)



**Observe Christian Citizenship Sunday
June 30, 1996**

reflection on how our vote can be used to secure a more righteous society.

In America, we get the government we deserve.

What can you do to be a good citizen in this election year?

- Pray that our government will affirm biblical morality in our laws.
- Register and vote. Christians, of all people, should strive to be good citizens. And yet, Christians participate at about the same dismal level of unbelievers.
- Seek permission from your pastor to lead a churchwide voter registration effort. A nonpartisan

voter registration drive does not jeopardize a church's tax-exempt status.

- Educate yourself and your church about the critical issues at stake in the election and where the candidates stand on those issues.
- Begin a Christian Life Committee as a means of educating the church throughout the year about moral and religious liberty issues.

James A. Smith was formerly director of government relations of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, based in Washington, D.C.

Creation of task force signals Convention's resolve to pursue racial reconciliation

By Dwayne Hastings

Southern Baptist leaders moved beyond crafting words to formulating logistics in the Convention's stated desire to confront and eradicate racism in the 150-year-old denomination during meetings in late February.

Following up on the Southern Baptist Convention's approval of the Racial Reconciliation Resolution last year in Atlanta, the SBC Inter-Agency Council called for the creation of a task force to develop recommendations that would move the Convention toward carrying out the intent of the resolution. The Inter-Agency Council (IAC) is composed of the chief executives of all the agencies and commissions of the SBC.

"The task force is an attempt and effort by the Inter-Agency Council to move toward the implementation of the intent of the resolution—to eradicate racism in the Southern Baptist Convention," said Richard Land, who will chair the group.

The SBC resolution passed during the Atlanta SBC sesquicentennial called for Southern Baptists to "commit ourselves to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry."

"We have to deal with the question of racial diversity and racial and ethnic misunderstanding in this country," said Land, who is president of the Christian Life Commission. "We are at a crisis point in American history in regard to the question of racial tensions and racial animosities and racial misunderstandings."

For three decades, Land said, America has tempered the issue of racism with public policy, making "significant progress in dealing with legal institutionalized racism and denial of basic constitutional rights." Yet he expressed concern a solution could ever be fashioned by lawmaking alone.

"Unfortunately a strong case

could be made that we've about reached the limits of what public policy, apart from a gospel message of changed hearts, can do," Land said. "There is no substitute for the spiritual healing and the reconciliation that is brought about by the gospel when it is properly applied to this area of human sin."

In establishing the task force, which will consist of one representative from each agency of the SBC, the IAC resolution also committed SBC agency heads "to strive for representation on our boards of trustees, our staff and faculties, and all other bodies, based on biblical qualifications and embracing

"We are at a crisis point in American history in regard to the question of racial tensions and racial animosities and racial misunderstandings."

the ethnic diversity of the Southern Baptist Convention and its churches."

The IAC action also asks the SBC Committee on Nominations to "set a priority to nominate persons representative of all ethnic groups to our boards of trustees." The committee further asked that those nominated be "persons who will be careful stewards and trustees of our institutions, and who will stand with Southern Baptists in Great Commission commitment, theological integrity, institutional accountability, and Cooperative Program support."

E.W. McCall, pastor of St. Stephens Missionary Baptist Church, La Puente, Calif., and president of the Southern Baptist African-American Pastor's Fellowship, applauded the IAC's move,

noting the leadership of the Convention must quarterback the drive toward "full ethnic and racial reconciliation."

"I am encouraged that the leadership of these agencies and commissions have said 'Let us carry the ball—we are willing to do this.' I think that is an admirable step."

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminar, and the current IAC chairman, said the Inter-agency Council realized it had an obligation and an opportunity to profoundly influence progress toward racial reconciliation within the Convention.

"As the IAC reflected on the resolution made last year on racial reconciliation and as we listened to the thoughts and the counsel of a number of our fellow Southern Baptists of African-American ethnic background, we decided it was essential that we take a direct leadership role in putting actual feet to the resolution," Patterson explained.

It is past time for talking, McCall agreed, saying, "I wouldn't want another study committee to say, 'In five years we'll get back with you.' We don't need to study; we need to do. We need to plan out some steps that need to be done. I think these are the persons who will get it done."

Calling the IAC's move "an expression of bold leadership," Gary Frost, SBC second vice-president and pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio, called on "Southern Baptists everywhere to 'pray without ceasing' for this bold endeavoring process that our fellowship would move with a sense of urgency to bring about a biblical, practical, and visible unity of all parts of our great Southern Baptist family."

Dwayne Hastings is director of communications for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. Baptist Press accounts were used in the compilation of this story.

Reconciliation benefits evangelism and missions

(Third in a series of three)

By A. William Merrell

Racial reconciliation efforts by churches result in more than just greater fraternal harmony. These efforts also yield positive results in missions and evangelism.

Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 1997. Cary Heard, pastor for 20 of those years, has led them in evangelism and reconciliation efforts in the African-American community through a targeted church mission effort and in the main congregation. The church has Asian, Hispanic, and African-American members. The pastor says, "We are open to all."

Five years ago Heard led the church into a partnership with the local association, the Home Mission Board, and a neighboring black church in beginning a mission targeting African Americans. He recognized that even their determined and well-publicized open-door policies were not sufficiently penetrating the African-American community.

The mission did well from the start, constituted as Gloryland Baptist Church, and has reached scores not previously evangelized. The congregation has been meeting in rented space, but has grown to the point of taking steps toward purchasing a building for a ministry to youth in crisis. Gloryland and Park Hill Church meet together regularly in celebrative worship services.

Gloryland is led by pastor Cedric Hayes, who grew up in East Gate housing project. His vision for reaching project residents with the gospel motivates energetic ministries and outreach to them. At the beginning, a food pantry, clothes closet, and a tutoring program were opened in one project. Five projects now have comparable ministries, and the church has evangelized and disciplined many of the residents. The church employs benevolence ministry to open the door for the gospel. Last Christmas, church

members prepared and distributed more than 500 food baskets to project residents.

Increasing vitality and fruitfulness have marked Park Hill since the founding of Gloryland. An outreach to the North Little Rock police department links as prayer partners each police family with one from the church. Police leaders credit the prayer ministry and cross-racial cooperation of city churches for the harmonious spirit that prevails in the community. Heard says, "It is an illustration of what churches, city fathers and citizens, black and white, can do when we all work together."

Park Hill's deep commitment to its community is matched by a firm

***Ministry that really
extends to the whole
world will extend
to everyone at its
home base.***

one to world missions. Last year, missions gifts were more than \$400,000, making them the thirty-fourth largest giver among Southern Baptists for the period. They desire to be faithful and to model missions giving for others. Fifteen percent of church receipts are set aside for the Cooperative Program.

Heard believes ministry that really extends to the whole world will extend to everyone at its home base.

Another Arkansas church dealing successfully with reconciliation issues is First Baptist Church of Monticello, located in the Mississippi River Delta in southeastern Arkansas.

Dennis Dodson recalls the beginning of his ministry there more than 17 years ago: "The church was divided over racial issues which had surfaced in a nearby children's home. Some church members were outspoken in their opposition to black children coming

to the home. It was a troublesome time."

Troublesome times over racial issues were not new. In the early seventies, after the church had black visitors, conflict arose. In a response many later regretted, some church members stated, "We don't ever want another black person in our church."

The pastor was aware of the incident when he came as a pastoral candidate and dealt with it directly. "When I came in view of a call, I told them that we should be open to receive any believer He called to join our church. This is the Lord's business; it is His church, and we shouldn't counter what God's will is for the church. In time, some of the very people who most objected earlier became reconcilers in the church."

Today, reconciliation characterizes the community, and the churches are in the lead. Dodson believes racial problems are primarily spiritual, saying, "I'm not a crusader, but we have seen a significant movement of God in the past year or so. It is not only in our church, but in churches of other denominations: Methodist, Assembly of God, Presbyterian. We had not had bad racial relations in the community for the past several years, but we were separated when it came to church."

The Lord has blessed the good will and efforts of Dodson and the people of the church, and they are growing, gaining new members, black and white, regularly. First Baptist has become a spiritual "home" for them—all of them.

The congregations described in this series have learned firsthand that racial reconciliation effort is a way to put into practice the gospel they preach. Their quest is not for social reconstruction; it is part of their pursuit of evangelism, mission and ministry.

A. William Merrell is vice-president for convention relations for the Executive Committee of the SBC.

Hastings approved at CLC trustee meeting

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Christian Life Commission unanimously elected Dwayne Hastings, news and information coordinator at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, as its director of communications during its semiannual meeting in early March.

Hastings, a 1995 master of divinity graduate from Southeastern, edited *Outlook* magazine and *The Olive Press* newjournal and wrote for Baptist Press during his two years in the news and information coordinator's job at the seminary. Before attending seminary, he served as an interim minister to youth for 18 months.

Previously, he worked for three different corporations for 14 years. While an undergraduate student at Vanderbilt University, Hastings was station manager and news director of a campus radio station.

Hastings received a bachelor of arts from Vanderbilt.

"Dwayne has a perfect mix of interests and talents that we need at the Christian Life Commission," said CLC President Richard Land. In addition to his experience in print journalism, radio, marketing and market analysis, Hastings has a "real dedication to communications as a ministry to the people of God," Land said.

"We're anxious to get him on board as soon as possible and are already excited about some of the ideas he has for reformatting some of our publications and some of our periodicals."

Hastings' radio experience is expected to be beneficial as the CLC prepares to inaugurate a weekly radio show. He also will write news releases; edit *Light*, the agency's ethics magazine; and supervise the CLC's product development.

He looks forward to working with the CLC in "exhorting, informing and equipping the saints on matters of social action, ethical con-

cerns and religious liberty," Hastings said.

"I argue against an empty faith, where the church is powerless, looming as a whitewashed tomb, and the witness of believers tragically hollow," he said. "There is a place in the public square for the children of God. Entrance is an obligation, not just a right."

The board unanimously approved Hastings to fill a position left vacant January 1 when Bill Merrell became vice-president of convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

In other actions, the board:

- Selected evangelical theologian Carl F.H. Henry to receive the CLC's 1996 John Leland Religious Liberty Award. Henry, a Southern Baptist, has been a leading evangelical writer and thinker for nearly half a century. He also served as editor of *Christianity Today*. In recent years, he has called for religious liberty for Christians in Muslim-dominated countries as well as Israel. The CLC recently published his latest book, *Has Democracy Had Its Day?*

- Voted to change the job description and title of Will Dodson, who works in the Washington office. He will serve as legal counsel as well as director of government relations, the title he previously held. Trustees also approved a 17 percent salary increase for Dodson because of his expanded responsibilities. The CLC plans to add another lawyer who will serve as legal counsel and director of citizenship concerns, Land said. Previously, the CLC had a general counsel.

- Approved up to an additional \$12,000 from this year's budget to complete work on the Washington office. The Capitol Hill town house has been under renovation and is expected to be finished by spring or early summer. The additional funds will help pay for such needs as decorations and architectural fees, Land said.

- Voted to provide \$5,000 for trustee Nancy Schaefer to represent the CLC at the next United Nations-sponsored conference. The meeting will be in June in Istanbul, Turkey. The CLC also provided \$5,000 to help underwrite Schaefer's participation at the women's conference last September in Beijing, China.

The CLC's program committee approved the theme for the next annual seminar and the site for the 1998 meeting. The 1997 seminar will be the CLC's 50th anniversary as a SBC-funded agency. The theme will be "Fifty Years and Counting: Cherishing Our Past, Charting Our Future." The seminar will be at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. The committee approved Charleston, S.C., for the '98 seminar.

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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Seminar speakers challenge church

(Continued from Page 1)

standard to say what it is we believe and what America needs, and if the candidates are not willing to rally to that standard, then I don't think we need to worry about what will happen to them on election day."

The church needs to experience change before it is able to exert the proper influence, some speakers said.

"We should not blame the politicians for the moral collapse of America," said O.S. Hawkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. "We need to put it where it belongs, at the feet of the church. Biblical, moral standards are forgotten in an attempt to appease an immoral culture and in some ways to market the church to a secular world.

"America's biggest problem is an apathetic church who has lost her first love," Hawkins said. "And in losing that first love, we have lost our influence."

Land said, "If we are going to have Christians in the public square and have faith in practice, we have to have the faith right first."

Among issues which the church needs to be more faithful to address, speakers said, are abortion, homosexuality, pornography, drugs and poverty.

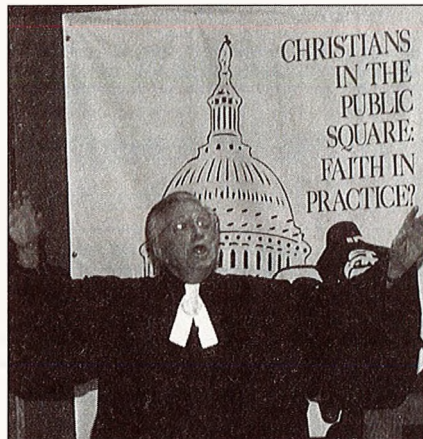
The church is the institution which can stop the killing of unborn children, and pastors are the key to mobilizing the church, said Michael Cloer, a Southern Baptist pastor who directs Pastors for Life. "The church must respond to abortion both by working to establish justice and by showing mercy," he said.

A potential ruling in a Hawaiian state court will further cripple the culture and "significantly undercut" the witness of the church, said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice. The court may allow recognition of same-sex marriages, making Hawaii the first state to take such action.

Homosexuals "are getting special rights, and we're barely hanging on to ours," Sekulow said, warning persecution may be near for the American church. "We've seen nothing yet if they legitimize what I am talking about. It will be beyond the scope of our imagination."

With the expansion of cyberporn, Christians, more than ever, need to take action, said Dee Jepsen, president of the Enough Is Enough anti-pornography campaign. "The church of Jesus Christ can do no less than stand against and root out the moral cancer of pornography," she said. "If it does not, I believe it will stand in judgment for that inaction."

Churches also need to combine



Drakeford as Jonathan Edwards

social ministry with spiritual outreach, said African-American Southern Baptist pastor E.W. McCall.

"Too often our churches are just there as a country club," McCall said. "No longer can the black community in particular and the whole of America in general depend upon government to take care of all our needs and wants. The black church must see the need to transform itself into a force to deal with holistic approaches to ministry."

Florida pastor Charles Roesel, whose church's evangelistic outreach is based on social ministry, said, "We ought to out-love the pagan world."

When Christians fail to confront social ills, there are tragic results, said African-American pastor Gary

Frost, second vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Today on the American scene there is a powerful Absalom who is struttin' his stuff in the face of the church," Frost said. "His name is Louis Farrakhan. He is rising up to become the champion of the oppressed. Why? Because righteous people didn't do anything."

Farrakhan is leader of the Nation of Islam.

"There is a sense we all have that America is one wrong turn away from disaster," Bauer said. "Having forgotten God, we have unleashed the hounds of hell on our streets, in our neighborhoods and communities."

Washington, D.C., pastor Mark Dever said the Bible clearly teaches God "hates the arrogance of proud nations and is committed to bringing them to realize the foolishness of trusting in anything other than Him."

"When God decides to judge a proud nation, no economic expansion, no amount of job creation, no Stealth bomber or Patriot missiles can save it."

Three members of the House of Representatives spoke at a congressional breakfast during the seminar. They were Rep. Tony Hall, D.-Ohio; Rep. Chris Smith, R.-N.J., and Rep. Charles Stenholm, D.-Texas. (See related article on Page 15.)

John Drakeford, professor emeritus at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, presented dramatic monologues on the lives of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley.

Other speakers were Dan Heimbach, ethics professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Gary Ledbetter, vice-president for student development at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

A total of 179 registrants and guests attended the seminar.

The 1997 seminar will be at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Compiled by Tom Strode. Marty Croll, Dwayne Hastings and Lee Weeks contributed to this article.

Why preach on ethical issues?

By Richard D. Land

The Word of God has been given to us by divine inspiration and supernaturally preserved by divine protection so that we might know God and His will for our lives. In the New Testament Timothy was instructed to "study" God's Word so that he might "show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). In the Old Testament, the preacher was described as "a wise man," who "also taught the people knowledge" and "sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly" (Eccl. 12:9-11 NASB).

Preaching on ethical issues means applying the eternal truths of Scripture to the moral and ethical issues people face in their lives. Biblical examples of such proclamation abound. Nathan engaged in ethical preaching when he denounced David for his adultery (2 Sam. 12:1-12). Isaiah preached on ethical issues by relating God's definition of true religion (Isa. 58:6-7). Jeremiah calls for God's people to turn away from idolatry, adultery, and injustice. Amos called for the people's offerings and prayers to be validated by a flood of justice and righteousness, instead of the injustice and unrighteousness which characterized their daily lives.

The New Testament is filled with examples of preaching on ethical issues. Over and over Jesus applied His teaching to the ethical issues of the day such as adultery, divorce, sabbath observance, stewardship, religious hypocrisy, injustice, materialism, citizenship, and many others. Jesus commanded Christians to be salt and light in society. In a decaying, degenerate, darkened world Jesus challenged Christians to be purifying and preserving salt and an illuminating and inspiring light.

Pastors must help church members understand and apply God's Word to the moral and ethical issues of the day so that they might better fulfill the mandate to be salt and light in society. This is especially needful in a day when the Judeo-Christian values on which our society was founded have been

abandoned by much of the population. Recent surveys by George Barna and others tell us that as many as 70 percent of Americans no longer accept the concept of absolutes—that some things are always right and their opposites are always wrong. America has descended in two generations from a society which was governed by Judeo-Christian values to one which operated from a "Christian memory" (as Francis Schaeffer described it), to one which has been submerged in moral relativism. In such a society, preaching on ethical issues is group counseling of the congregation, helping them to understand the ethical applications of the eternal truths of Scripture.

One of the many reasons the apostle Paul's epistles resonate so readily with the hearts and spirits of every generation of believers is that he invariably applied the divinely revealed and inspired truths of his epistles to the lives of believers. In virtually all of Paul's letters there is what some commentators call the "hinge" section, so named because at that point in the letter Paul "swings" from doctrinal instruction to practical application. Paul never leaves his readers in doubt about what the eternal truths of God require in terms of their daily lives.

Perhaps the most familiar of Paul's hinge passages is found in Romans 12:1-2. Usually the ethical application of the message is signaled, as it is in Romans, with the word, "Therefore." From then on, Paul lays out what the believer's response must be to God's grace in Christ. This is followed by five chapters of peerless application of how to live "Christianly" in the world.

It must also be emphasized that preaching on ethical issues must always be preceded by proclamation of the gospel message of evangelism and the new birth in Jesus Christ through faith in Him alone for salvation. The motto of the Christian Life Commission is "Helping Changed People Change the World." People must be changed by a new birth in Christ before they can commence application of gospel truth in their lives. Truly biblical preaching preaches both for the conversion of the lost

and for the conviction of the saved.

The greatest preachers in Christian history have understood this truth. In 1912, G. Campbell Morgan, the great British preacher said:

The Church is responsible for the religious life of the city, for the moral standards of the city, for the social order of the city. If you can persuade me that we have no responsibilities, that the Church exists merely for the conserving of the life of her own members, then I will leave the Church, and join with others who have a keener sense of moral and religious responsibility; in the light of New Testament teaching...the Church is against the city as it is, in order to make the city what it ought to be.

The Church lifts her voice in protest against iniquity in the city or nation because her business is to make the city and the nation what God would have them to be.

Dr. Morgan understood that any sermon that sought to exegete and apply Scripture to moral and ethical issues was expository and biblical in the best senses of those words, whether or not it took the form of verse-by-verse exposition.

Why preaching instead of just teaching and instruction? Preaching is the divine-human moment when God uses His human instrument, the preacher, to impart His message to His people. Preaching aims to exhort and to convict and to change lives and behaviors. Baptists have always been people of the pulpit as well as people of the Book. Baptists have always believed in the primacy of preaching in Christian worship. As John Killinger aptly described it:

In the end, it is the miracle of preaching, the magic of the gospel, that dispels the gloom again from this much-miracled, time-wearied Camelot of ours, and sets its knights and ladies all adance again. Nothing else can out-Merlin it; it is the supreme gift of God to this soul-spent, jagged age we live in.

Richard D. Land is president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Light from the Capital

Some U.S. businesses aid global persecution

The United States government has neglected to deal with the global persecution of Christians, and some American business interests even have supported such practices by repressive foreign governments, according to recent testimony before a congressional panel.

Christian Life Commission President Richard Land and most of the other 11 witnesses before a subcommittee of the House of Representatives International Relations Committee testified to the inadequacy of the U.S. government's response to the persecution of Christians, especially under communist and Islamic regimes. (See an abridged version of Land's testimony on pages 2-4.)

The February 15 hearing was the first before the International Operations and Human Rights Subcommittee to deal specifically with the persecution of Christians, subcommittee chairman Christopher Smith, R.-N.J., said.

Despite claims to the contrary, there is no evidence economic progress with the United States in a country with a repressive regime results in greater respect for human rights or religious liberty, said Nina Shea, director of Freedom House's program on religious freedom.

"In fact, religious freedom has deteriorated in both [China and Vietnam] as trade has been renewed," Shea said. "And what we're seeing is that, unfortunately, a number of American companies are incorporating local practices."

Shea cited the case of Gao Feng, 27, a Chinese Christian who was arrested for "praying without authorization." He missed work for a couple of weeks at the Chrysler Jeep plant in Beijing because of his detention. Chrysler fired him because he did not have an official reason for his absence, Shea said.

Smith said a large consortium of U.S. business interests had the

"audacity to assert" in a position paper "human rights had improved dramatically" in China.

The position paper by the Business Coalition for U.S.-China Trade also said the annual debates on most favored nation trade status for China "had set back progress on trade and, get this, human rights," Smith said. "Now, as [Shea's] testimony clearly indicates, they are actual enforcers" of religious persecution.

In a meeting with U.S. Chamber of Commerce officials in Beijing, Smith said those present "were unaware of the coercive population control program and thought it was a figment of my imagination when I spoke about it." One member said, "Religious freedom flourishes here," even though he was referring to the liberty to attend an official church, which is under the control of the government, Smith said.

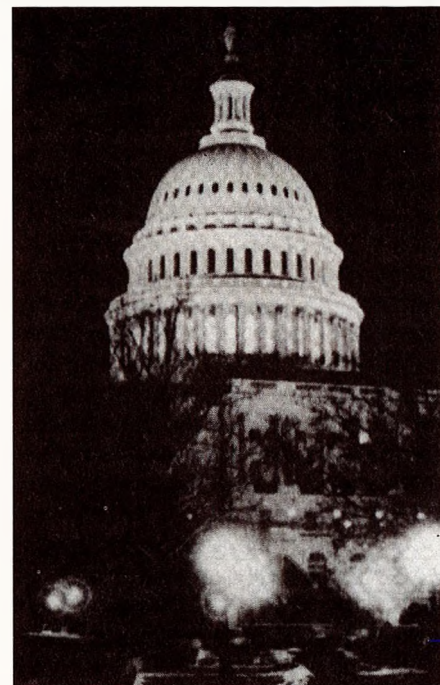
"It must be terribly demoralizing for people of the world" who know of Americans' love for freedom "to see American citizens acquiesce to this kind of thing," said Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R.-Calif.

Land said, "Calvin Coolidge is reported to have once said, 'The business of America is business.' I do not believe that. I've never believed that. I don't believe most of my constituency believes that. I don't believe most Americans believe that.

"Most Americans believe that the business of the United States of America is the propagation of our values. And the most fundamental value of this republic is freedom of conscience and, as part of that, freedom of religious belief."

Testimony focused primarily on persecution under communist regimes in China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba and under Muslim-dominated regimes in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Pakistan.

Shea said American missionaries recently reported to her the repression of Christians in China is



the greatest since the late 1970s. "The current word on the street among evangelicals is that local authorities are being pressed hard to round up all evangelicals for registration or arrest," Shea said. "An American Bible missionary who recently returned from China said that an arrest warrant with the names of 3,000 evangelical preachers is being circulated by the Public Security Bureau."

Smith and Rohrabacher said the attention given to the issue will continue. "We are going to make this a significant national and international issue," Rohrabacher said.

— Tom Strode

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Finding the Spiritual on the Hill

By Dwayne Hastings

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Most visitors to the United States Capitol don't come to that august building to see the chapel on the second floor but are instead attracted to the visitors' gallery to overlook the political rough-and-tumble below on the House of Representatives and Senate floors.

But on Tuesday afternoons, visitors would find more serious business taking place in the Capitol building's chapel. Rep. Tony Hall, D.-Ohio, and two other congressmen, along with some local pastors, meet there weekly for prayer and reflection.

"We talk about Christ and about things that are important to us," Hall said during the congressional breakfast at the 29th annual seminar of the Christian Life Commission. "I find that these moments are really the best moments I spend."

Hall indicated political party affiliation is not an issue: "The other two congressmen are conservative Republicans. We get along famously. They're really my very best friends in the Congress."

Coming to Washington in 1978 as a freshman congressman from Dayton, Ohio, Hall was not a Christian. "I found Jesus here in Washington, D.C. It really made a big difference in my life as [to] where I was when I first came up here."

Hall, who was presented with the CLC's 1995 Distinguished Service Award during the conference, said he was fortunate to be in a position where his faith could impact public policy. As founding member of the select committee on hunger, Hall is known as an advocate of hunger relief policy in the U.S. and around the world.

In presenting Hall with the award, CLC President Richard Land called Hall "a humble believer who regularly and unashamedly attests to his faith in Jesus Christ in the public square."

"There are a lot of people here who love the Lord," Hall said,

acknowledging many people are working together to do good things in Washington, D.C. "You never read about that in the papers."

Every Wednesday morning, Hall convenes a group of believers in the basement of the Martin Luther King public library to pray for the people of Washington.

"We pray for the President, and we pray for the leadership of the Congress—Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich. We pray for the mayor, the Cabinet and business people—we pray for the city because this is the Capital."

His conversion to Christianity also brought Hall to reconsider his view on abortion; he was pro-choice. "I didn't like it, but I had no basis for any other position."



Tony Hall receives CLC award

"When I became a believer and I began to read the Scriptures, I realized I had been wrong all those years," Hall explained. "The Holy Spirit changed me, and the love of Christ changed me."

He said the Clinton administration was wrong in its stance on the issue. "Why he [Clinton] feels this way about abortion, I don't know. Keep praying for him."

Charles Stenholm, D.-Texas, also addressed the breakfast meeting, noting every Thursday at 8 a.m. nearly 50 congressmen gather for the House prayer breakfast.

"It's a special hour that we

always block out, for therein is the best opportunity to find the answers," Stenholm said.

In response to questions from the audience, both Hall and Stenholm indicated they were supporting fellow Democrat Clinton for a second term as president.

Also speaking at the congressional breakfast, Rep. Chris Smith, R.-N.J., lashed out at the United States government, especially President Clinton, for a failure to respond to global reports of persecution of Christians.

Smith, whose subcommittee of the House of Representatives International Relations Committee has held hearings on religious persecution, said human rights in the current administration is nothing more than abortion rights and homosexual rights: "These are the twin pillars of this administration's policy on human rights. That's what they care about, not religious persecution, not about suffering human rights activists; they care about pushing abortion rights around the world."

He criticized the "soothing words of concern" which have come out of the Clinton White House, saying instead, "We need action."

The reluctance of the Clinton administration to link most-favored-nation status with human rights meant the People's Republic of China could trade with the U.S. and continue its repression of Christians with impunity, Smith said. The Chinese had promised otherwise, he said.

"They took us for fools," Smith said. "Human rights does not matter with this administration. It's as if nobody cares anymore."

The church has failed to be a diligent intercessor for the millions of persecuted Christians around the world, Smith said, calling on Christians to pray for fellow believers.

"The most powerful weapon on the face of the earth is the persevering prayer of a righteous man coupled with fasting and coupled with a Holy Spirit-inspired heart," he said.

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