

LIGHT

THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1999

Remember.

“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

An Odd Balance of Trade: Sacred Cows, Suffering Christians

BY DR. RICHARD D. LAND



Richard Land is President of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and host of the nationally syndicated daily radio talk show, For Faith & Family.

The year 1999 opened with the brutal murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines in India—a country where some worship “sacred cows,” but evidently feel free to kill Christian missionaries.

According to news reports at the time, the 58-year-old Staines and his two young sons were burned to death after a mob of some 100 Hindu fanatics set fire to their car in the Indian state of Orissa. In the area to conduct a week-long Bible camp for tribal Christians, Staines had worked in the region for 30 years, ministering to lepers and tribal people and was supported by the Beau Desert Baptist Church in Queensland, Australia.

And news accounts just days ago reported a 26-year-old Catholic nun was kidnapped and the victim of an attempted assault in Eastern India, only the latest in a disturbing series of attacks against Christians whose charity work and evangelism apparently are threatening some local religious leaders.

While reports like these generate both sympathy and outrage in the hearts of Westerners, it is the nationals in countries around the world who are experiencing the brunt of this persecution. Every news report of a believer that is tormented or killed for his or her faith in Christ represents tens of thousands of Christians—from East Timor to Sudan—who are the targets of attack because they have rejected the idols and customs of their homeland and embraced the truth of Christianity.

As this century draws to a close, it more evident than ever that the persecution suffered by the 1st Century church and reflected in the Apostle Paul's epistles is not just a phenomenon once and for always sealed in the annals of ancient history.

Richard John Neuhaus wrote in his magazine, *First Things*: “There is little disputing the fact that this, above all others, has been the century of Christian martyrdom. Yet that reality receives curiously little attention among contemporary Christians.”

Three years ago the attention of Western Christians was focused in a renewed and providential way on the plight of persecuted believers around the world in the declaration of an international annual day of prayer for those suffering such persecution.

Since then tens of thousands of churches have joined their hearts and voices across the globe in intercession for the plight of those whose faith has made them the target of harassment, imprisonment, and even death. Pressure from concerned Christians prompted the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act last year which created an ambassadorship at large for international religious freedom and a nine-member advisory panel, the Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The statute also requires the U.S. State Department to publish an annual report on global religious liberty, and that Congress and the executive branch “designate” the worst offending countries and suggest punishment in the form of diplomatic pressure or econom-

ic sanctions. The first such report was released in September and cited a litany of horrific religious liberty violations; yet so far our government has been silent on what to do next.

The wanton violence and bloodshed against Christians condoned, and even sanctioned, by many governments and meted out by roving bands of hooligans, demands a response from Christians in the West. The failure of the American government to do more than just put out a 1,000-page report that details incidents of religious persecution demands that American Christians tell our State Department that we want more than words, we want action.

The report notes that judgments on religious freedom violations are based on the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it continues, “The law nevertheless does not attempt to impose ‘the American way’ on other nations.”

When a Hindu militant in India tells the world press after the burning death of missionary Graham Staines, “It's open season on Christians now,” perhaps its time for U.S. Christians to tell their government not just cows have a right to a peaceful and sacred existence.

Christians around the world need our prayers that they would both be bold in their witness in the face of persecution and that their basic human freedoms would be secure. Instead of coddling repressive regimes, the U.S. government should be pushing for the protection of Christians in these faraway lands.

Perhaps our international balance of trade would be damaged if we sought to “be a voice for the voiceless” (Prov. 31:8) and worked to export a little of the “American way” (i.e., respect for basic human liberties) to those countries who either mandate or condone withholding them from Christian or other minority religious faiths. If so, it would be a small price to pay for improving our moral balance of trade with God by doing the right thing and standing up for those being persecuted for their religious conscience around the world. ■



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Why the Cross Can Do What Politics Can't

BY ERWIN W. LUTZER

Back in the 16th century, God raised up Martin Luther to combat the political and doctrinal corruption that had accumulated throughout the centuries.

Despite Luther's many faults, he recovered the only message that could possibly transform the human heart. He knew that there could not be moral recovery without theological recovery.

First, the Reformation insisted that the Bible alone is a reliable message from God. This means that all other religions—all other prophets, gurus, and revelations—must be rejected. This is a message that must be heard again in our day of pluralism, pop religion, and “words from God” that supposedly come to some of God's prophets.

Of course we must be tolerant of other beliefs, if by that we mean that we must respect the views of others no matter how different they are from our own. But we must combat a mindless tolerance that believes that every opinion is of equal value because it arises from an individual's own experience. Our task is to show the basis for the entire Christian worldview.

Second, the Reformation insisted that salvation cannot be the work of man, but must be the work of God alone. Our responsibility is to share this truth with all clarity and conviction with total dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We must trust God to do the work that no man can do.

Surely we should weep over the statistics that are so often touted by the pollsters: Although a large percentage of people claim to be “born again,” only comparatively few can recite the Ten Commandments or know who preached the Sermon on the Mount. The fact is that many

We must understand that only the cross is able to reconcile men and women to God. To “believe in Christ” without a clear picture of our desperate need of Him . . . and to not understand why His death for sinners was necessary if we are to be saved . . . will cause our gospel preaching to fall short of “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1: 16).

evangelicals proclaim a gospel that is incapable of saving anyone. Thus so often there is no transformation of life, no change of moral and spiritual direction.

Finally, we must understand that only the cross is able to reconcile men and women to God. To “believe in Christ” without a clear picture of our desperate need of Him . . . and to not understand why His death for sinners was necessary if we are to be saved . . . will cause our gospel preaching to fall short of “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1: 16).

Indeed, it is possible that you, the reader, have never been “born again” by the power of God's Spirit. If not, or if you lack assurance, let me remind you that apart from Christ we are spiritually dead, unable to contribute to our redemption (Eph. 2:14). But thankfully, God is able to raise the dead and give sight to our blind eyes. In ourselves we do not even have the faith by which we can receive God's forgiveness and redemption.

If we acknowledge this helplessness, God will grant us the

ability to transfer our trust to Christ alone, and we will be converted by God. The promise is there: “[A]s many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1: 12,13 NKJV). Clearly we are saved by God's will, not our own. And again, “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures” (James 1:18 NAS).

This is the message of life that is needed in this confused generation. The citizens of heaven must return to doing what only the citizens of heaven can do. We must keep pointing beyond this life to the next, encouraging others to join us on our pilgrimage to the eternal city of God.

Let us say with Thomas Moore, “I die the king's good servant, but God's first.”

When the pilgrims came to America, it was to establish freedom of religion, but evidently

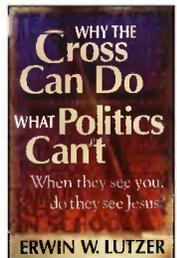
that wasn't the case for everyone. Roger Williams was banished from New England because he was a Baptist. The Puritans followed the covenant theology of Calvin. They came seeking freedom for the Protestant faith. They would have been scandalized by the idea of religious freedom as we think of it today.

That said, the Puritans (called such because of their emphasis on purity of doctrine) were not sour, gloomy, and world-denying. They agreed with Luther that a person who made good shoes and sold them at a fair price was serving God as much as the clergy. They also believed in a good education not merely in theology but also in the humanities. Doctrinally, they believed in the inability of man to come to God on his own; apart from God's direct, specific intervention an individual cannot be saved. This doctrine made them helplessly dependent on God for the proclamation of the gospel.

However, by the time the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, the participants believed that doctrinal agreement was not necessary for the preservation of the union. Of special interest to us is the First Amendment with its famous phrase, “Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The intention of this phrase was to limit the power of government to make sure that the U.S. did not establish a state church to which all must adhere. Also, the government was not to interfere with religious expression. And it was believed that religion could and should be practiced in the political sphere. Just witness the verses of Scripture engraved in government buildings in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer has served as pastor of Moody Church since 1980. He is the best-selling author of *Why the Cross Can Do What Politics Can't*, *How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit*, *One Minute After You Die*, and *Hitler's Cross*. In addition, he is the featured speaker on the nationwide broadcasts *The Moody Church Hour*, *In The Night*, and *Running to Win*.



Excerpted from *Why the Cross Can Do What Politics Can't* by Erwin W. Lutzer, Harvest House Publishers, 1999. ISBN: 1-56507-998-1. Reprinted with permission. Available from the ERLC (see ordering information, page 14).

BKCRO \$9.00 ea.

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The Root Cause of America's Moral Collapse

BY JOHN FRANKLIN

John Franklin serves with LifeWay Christian Resources (formerly Baptist Sunday School Board) as prayer and discipleship consultant. Prior to joining the LifeWay staff, Franklin was minister of prayer at First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga.

This article is the second in a series by John Franklin to be featured in Light. The first ran in the May-June 1999 issue and dealt with the morality of our nation spotlighted through the scandal surrounding President Bill Clinton. In the next issue, John will address the belief system that caused Christians to lose the fear of God.

All biblical quotes are taken from the NKJV.

I contended in a previous article that the trial of President Clinton was not as much about his morality as that of the nation, citing biblical passages which prove that God either orchestrates or allows circumstances to test the heart to reveal its condition before Him. I argued that the reason God does it is for our benefit, that we might come to our senses and wake up before He renders a final judgment against us.

And the need to wake up has never been clearer. The cauldron of national ills continues to boil over in events like Columbine and Wedgewood. The country deplors such shocking tragedies while stoking the fire with the wood of immorality and violence. As outrageous, insensible, and incomprehensible as our national behavior may be, I am more dumbfounded by yet another fact. Did you know that Barna has conducted polls that reflect no significant difference between those who claim to be Christian and those who do not? When it comes to voting issues such as abortion, or lifestyle habits such as living together before marriage, both Christians and non-Christians believe and do the same things in basically the same proportions. How in the world can tens of millions name the name of Christ yet continue in wickedness? How can those who died to sin still live in it?

If a fringe element of a few thousand existed, perhaps we could quietly ignore it. But when an overwhelming number of Americans claim to be Christian, then integrity demands that we evaluate ourselves: "What is it about the quality of our discipleship that allows vast numbers of professing Christians to comfortably cling to abhorrent lifestyles and still believe that a holy God accepts them?" Could so many have so misunderstood the demands of Christ if we were adequately communicating the requirements of the gospel? If "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free," and masses continue in bondage to sin, then we've failed to proclaim some part of the truth.

Nearly two years ago Henry Blackaby was talking about what it would take for a moral and spiritual turnaround in our land, and he noted that every great spiritual awakening rediscovered some lost truth about God. Unable to contain my curiosity, I asked him, "What is it in our day?" Without the least hesitation, he replied, "The fear of God."

After studying Scriptures that address fear and its forms, I heartily agree. The command to fear God is most commonly mentioned as a deterrent to sin. When God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel in Exodus 20, He caused all of Mt. Sinai to quake and smoke, engulfing the top of it with thunder and lightning. The people were so petrified that they begged Moses to talk with God and not them, "lest we die." Moses makes an interesting statement in verse 20, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." Two verses among many affirm this principle: "[B]y the fear of the Lord one departs from evil" (Prov. 16:6), and "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13). Conversely, Scripture often speaks of those who continue in sin as having "no fear of God" (Ps. 36:1, Rom. 3:18). Clearly God meant fearing our accountability to Him to be a great motivation for refraining or departing from sin.

The application for America is readily apparent. Her seared conscience and unbridled licentiousness could instantly be cured by a realistic vision of a holy God before whom we shall all give an account.

Could anyone continue in vile immorality who really believed that God "by no means clears the guilty" (Num. 14:18), but in the Day of Judgment that Jesus "Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15)?

Our forefathers understood the fear of God. They often interpreted national calamities to be God's expression of displeasure at their sin. In times of pestilence or war, Puritans responded by searching their souls. Perhaps no finer example of this belief exists than Abraham Lincoln's quote in his second inaugural address where he attributes the Civil War to God's judgment on America for the iniquity of slavery. "Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Unfortunately, the awareness of our accountability for sin has been lost from modern culture, and America does not fear God. The Bible has been barred from the formation of our children's character. Judges have pulled down the Ten Commandments from courtroom walls. Prayer has been banned from public arenas. The role of Christian influence has been painstakingly blotted from the pages of our history books. In days past, ministers commanded respect because of who they represented, but now the United States seems to disparage anything Christian, unless it's a reinterpreted Christianity that panders to their version of tolerance. In place of respect exists a proactive course of disregarding and despising God — and that in light of all that He has done for us. No, America no longer fears God.

But I'm not sure she is to blame. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus noted that two defining characteristics of His followers are salt and light, agents of preservation and illumination to others. If the nation is not being preserved or illumined, then what is the problem? Was Jesus wrong, or have we lost our flavor? Could the utter moral collapse of our society really have occurred in a country founded upon the character of tens of millions of salty, shining Christians?

Obviously not. If no significant difference exists in the lifestyles and beliefs of those in the church and those outside the church, could the problem be that Christians don't fear God either? Could we too continue clinging to sin if we truly believed there would be an accountability for us? Would we feel secure with a knowledge that God doesn't show favoritism? Perhaps we don't fear God any more than the world does.

This explains our societal deluge of immorality. The world's blatant pursuit of sin is only the logical conclusion of the church's acceptance of it. We have lost our saltiness, and America rots as a result. No greater need exists today than to recapture this truth, so how do we do it?

In order to return, we must first retrace our steps to find where we deviated from the paths of our forefathers. In the next issue, I will address the belief system that caused Christians to lose the fear of God. For now, suffice it to say that the most critical need in our churches and culture today is to recapture a proper understanding of what it means to fear God. ■

View bulletin inserts in a whole new light.

Introducing *LifeLight*, the ERLC's answer to the growing demand by Southern Baptists for cutting-edge reference materials that address some of life's most critical social needs. *LifeLight* replaces the traditional bulletin insert offered by the ERLC with an expanded four-page format that not only gives biblical insight on the social issue, but details statistics from real-life situations. In addition, *LifeLight* offers prayer points, specific action steps concerned Christians can take, and contact resources to help those who find themselves ensnared by cultural influences. Most important, *LifeLight* includes a step-by-step outline for those living in darkness to come into the light of salvation through Jesus Christ.

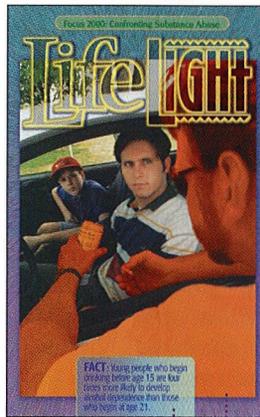
LifeLight can be used as a bulletin insert, pamphlet, or informational hand-out in conjunction with social issues Sundays on the Southern Baptist calendar or anytime when addressing these topics in your church:

- Sanctity of Human Life (Jan. 16)
- Racial Reconciliation (Feb. 13)
- Substance Abuse Prevention (Mar. 19)
- Citizenship & Religious Liberty (July 2)
- Religious Persecution (Aug. 6)
- Gambling (Sept. 17)
- Hunger (Oct. 8)

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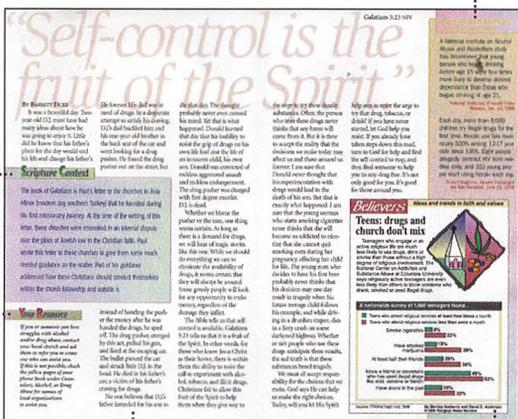


Specific prayer points for individuals and congregations related to issue

Action steps for concerned Christians as well as individuals ensnared by the featured cultural issue

Plan of salvation to bring individual(s) to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

"Factoids" on featured issue relating current statistics from real-life situations

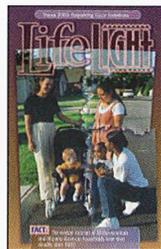


Commentary written in layman's terms relating real-life scenario along with biblical application

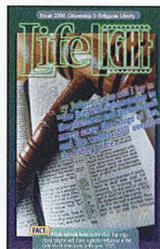
Visual illustration



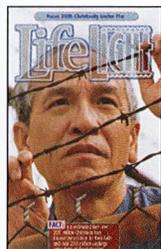
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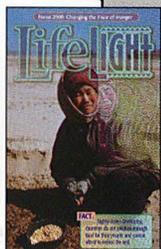
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The Ethics of

BY K. DANIEL GLOVER

Flash-back to the summer of 1978. On July 25 of that year in an English hospital, John and Lesley Brown rejoiced at the birth of their daughter, Louise. The rest of the world, meanwhile, continued the passionate debate it had begun months earlier at the news of Louise's conception ... in a petri dish.

The media heralded the first successful use of in vitro fertilization (IVF) as an extraordinary development, but religious leaders condemned it as evidence of scientists "playing God." Some scientists were wary of the ramifications of the world's first "test-tube baby"; others defended the technique perfected by Robert Edwards as a noble remedy for the childless and hopeless.

Now flash-forward to the present. Louise Brown, nearing her 21st birthday, is virtually forgot-

ten by the masses, and IVF has become commonplace. Hundreds of clinics in America alone perform the procedure, resulting in the births of some 60,000 American children between 1981 and 1996. Would-be parents pay tens of thousands of dollars — all or most of it out of pocket because many insurance companies do not cover infertility treatments — to conceive.

Few of the births merit a mention in the press. Yet behind the scenes, the debate about assisted reproductive technology (ART) rages as strongly today as it did two decades ago. The reason: Louise Brown's birth opened the floodgates to a range of technological advances (egg and sperm donation and freezing, gene selection) that have raised even more ethical and legal questions (lesbian and postmenopausal pregnancies, selective abortion,

sperm-bank franchises) than Brown's birth ever did.

Law professor Lori B. Andrews explains today's reality in her new book, *The Clone Age: Adventures in the New World of Reproductive Technology*, when she says this: "I feel as if the world is locked into a battle over who can push the boundaries the farthest."

That controversy would surround an act as intimate as procreation should not be surprising. But likewise, that so many of the estimated 6.1 million infertile women and their partners would use controversial technologies like IVF to conceive should be equally understandable because of the innate human urge to bear and rear children.

For that reason, people who have undergone fertility treatments and who work in the field are quick to note the benefits of reproductive technology. "The technology is improving, the techniques are improving, and the success rates are rising," says Sean Tipton, a spokesman for the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM).

"Women who are unable to ovulate can be stimulated and have their eggs actually removed," adds Kimberly R. Taylor, executive director of The Fertility Foundation Inc. "Men who have low sperm counts can have their sperm injected into an egg to increase chances of fertilization. ... Today, thanks to the advancements of technology, they have a chance."

But Robert Orr, director of clinical ethics at Loma Linda University in California, sees the other side of the equation. "The development of ART techniques is a good example of the applica-

tion of medical technology to try to alleviate human suffering," he says. "However, the potential 'good' of this endeavor often causes eager couples and infertility professionals to ignore some troubling and unresolved ethical questions."

Andrews paints a disturbing portrait of the fertility industry in *The Clone Age*. She complains of specialists who earn an average of \$625,000 a year (more than any other type of doctor), researchers who buck tradition by patenting medical technology to maximize profits, and clinics that inflate pregnancy success statistics and shirk their duties to inform patients of the risks of treatment and likelihood of success.

Like others in her field, she characterizes ART as "the Wild West of medicine," a trade that has "no defined boundary" and few laws to govern what researchers and doctors can and cannot do. Researchers, she notes as an example, used IVF on humans before they tried the technology on baboons and chimpanzees.

"No one," Andrews concludes, "is giving sufficient thought to what criteria should be used to compare technologies and make decisions about what should be allowed in the first place."

The ramifications of that lack of forethought are monumental, argues Robert W. Evans, president of Veritas Ministries and director of the Veritas Institute for the Study of Bioethics and Public Values in Auburn, Calif. "We are clearly heading into an era in which the meaning of 'family' and 'child' have been redefined," he says. "I strongly

FOR MORE INFORMATION

▲ American Society for Reproductive Medicine:
www.asrm.com

▲ Centers for Disease Control: 1995 Assisted Reproductive Technology Success Rates Reports
www.cdc.gov/nccdrp/drh/arts/index.htm

▲ International Council on Infertility Information Dissemination:
www.inciid.org

▲ Resolve, the national infertility support group:
www.resolve.org

▲ Ethics Updates, Literature on Reproductive Technologies - offers a list of Web resources on reproductive technologies and ethics:

www.acusd.edu/ethics/reproductive/technologies.html

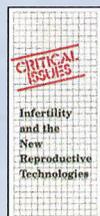
Suggested Reading

Brave New Families

Author Scott Rae discusses biblical ethics and reproductive technologies in a sensitive, straightforward, practical way.

BKBRA (247 pages)

\$10.00 ea.



Infertility and the New Reproductive Technologies

This pamphlet takes a look at fertility drugs, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, egg donation, and surrogacy.

CIINF

\$.33 ea.

Available from the ERLC (to order, see page 14).

Baby-making

suspect that the consequences of such changes, whether foreseen or not, will be riddled with ethical challenges that will severely test our wisdom."

"In the end," Evans adds, "I am of the opinion that these changes will likely lead to our own undoing."

Few people familiar with ART would deny the numerous ethical conundrums wrought by fertility treatments. Indeed, the roster of reproductive newsmakers confirms that questions emerge regularly.

Remember the 1986 case of "Baby M" and surrogate mother Mary Beth Whitehead's unsuccessful effort to keep the child she was paid to bear for someone else? Or the sensational news in 1992 that Vienna, Va., fertility specialist Cecil Jacobsen had used his own sperm to conceive as many as 75 children for various women via infertility treatments?

More recently, the fertility clinic at the University of California-Irvine in 1996 found itself amid a legal imbroglio over charges of embryo theft. That story, for which the *Orange County Register* won a Pulitzer Prize, was in the news again this week, when the university agreed to pay \$20 million to settle all but a few of the lawsuits generated by the controversy.

Despite the periodic bad news, the ASRM's Tipton praises his industry. Every field has its ethical dilemmas and unethical practitioners, he says, but fertility specialists have done their best to address those problems. The ASRM even publishes its ethics committee's reports and statements on the organization's Web page for all to consider.

Tipton scoffs at the suggestion that governments should regulate the fertility industry to any extent. And even if elected officials and bureaucrats are so inclined, he argues, Americans would protest because of their long-held tradition of resistance to government meddling in both the doctor/patient privilege and their private reproductive lives.

ART "definitely needs to be regulated," says Doreen L. Hock, an assistant professor at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's University Center for Reproductive Endocrinology and Fertility. But, she argues, "we need to approach it from within our field."

If the government wants to do anything about the shortcomings in the fertility industry, Tipton adds, it should provide more research funding and mandate health insurance coverage

of treatments. The New York legislature may act this week on a bill to mandate at least minimal insurance coverage of infertility. But even if it does, Tipton says, it would be only the 14th state to enact such a law.

All parties to the ART debate agree that two things are certain for now: (1) The debate about the pros and cons of fertility treatment will continue indefinitely, and (2) As new technologies emerge, the ethical dilemmas they pose will become all the more complicated.

Again, look at the stories of late. This year alone, ART developments worldwide have included news of babies conceived from two different mothers, of the potential for artificial wombs, and of an IVF mix-up that led to the birth of one white child and one black child to a white couple. The ongoing Human

Genome Project and the hot-button issue of cloning are sure to be central components of tomorrow's infertility debates.

"The issues arising now — and coming in the future, I fear — are endless," says Taylor, of The Fertility Foundation. "Until a line is drawn as to what is going too far, the issues will continue to arise. At the same time, who has the right to draw those lines?"

K. Daniel Glover is the associate editor of *IntellectualCapital.com* and a former editor and reporter at *Congressional Quarterly*. E-mail him at danny@voxcap.com.

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▲ In 1995, 15% of women of childbearing age had ever sought infertility advice; that includes medical advice, tests, drugs, surgery, or assisted reproductive technologies (ART). Only 12% sought advice in 1988.

"Fertility, Family Planning, and Women's Health: New Data From the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth," U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

▲ Factors causing infertility:

Tubal factor: 31% Male Factor: 18%
Endometriosis: 14% Other factors: 18%
Uterine Factor: 1% Unexplained: 15%

1995 ART Report, Center for Disease Control

▲ One cycle of IVF costs an average of \$7,800 (from consultation to transfer).

"American Society for Reproductive Medicine," 1995



Dr. Hristo Kulichev was deported from his church in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1985 and put in prison. As his church continued to grow for the next three years, he was deported in 1988 to a small Muslim village in south Bulgaria away from his family in Sofia. He now pastors a Congregational Church in the central part of Sofia and is President of the Union of Congregational Churches in Bulgaria.

What I learned in prison...

BY THE REV. DR. HRISTO KULICHEV, BULGARIA

What can a man do confined within the walls of a prison cell? Freedom is taken away from him as well as the opportunity to attend services in church. He has no right to read the Bible. His watch and pen are confiscated along with any tiny bit of paper with which he could relieve the monotony of his stay in the cell. This is the intention of those who have imprisoned him, so that they may exert mental pressure and break down his resistance.

Under such circumstances, the only thing anyone cannot do is take away the opportunity to pray. I realized that when I needed prayer most, God deprived me of the chance to do anything else. In my loneliness I could be in constant fellowship with God, the only source of power in my life. In prison I realized how cunningly Satan works in our lives when we have freedom, keeping us busy with all kinds of things that give us less time to pray.

In prison I came to know that God can satisfy our needs in two different ways: by giving us what we pray for and by delivering us from the need for which we pray. In prison, especially during times of questioning, food is scarce. I was hungry most of the time, and like others thought mostly about food. Then I prayed, "Lord, You fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Here there is only one of me, so even crumbs will be enough." God did not give me more bread, but He did free me from the feelings of hunger so that they no longer occupied my mind.

I had the practical experience in prison that the more eager and specific my prayers were, the quicker and more clearly God answered them. During a meeting with the examining magistrate, he asked me if I would like to see my wife, and together with her decide on who my advocate would be. I was thrilled. I waited impatiently for the meeting—perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow, maybe in the morning or afternoon. The days passed in futile expectation. I realized I was losing my mind and told myself it was all part of the magistrate's wily plan to destroy my peace of mind. Then I prayed, "Lord, deliver me from anything egotistical. I leave everything in Your hands. Please take care of my family and me. Help me remain faithful to You." He gave me His peace and a bliss that never left me during all my days in prison.

There were 50 to 60 other prisoners in the cell. Every morning and evening I knelt by my bed and prayed. One day the person in charge of the room told me in front of everyone: "Hristo, the chief said not to pray in the room anymore."

"Let him say it to me," I answered. Several days later the chief called and asked me: "Were you informed not to pray in your room?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then why do you go on praying?"

"Because I am a Christian and a pastor. I am here not because I am a thief or a robber, but because I serve my God in preaching the gospel. Praying is one of the ways to serve God."

"In this way you are making propaganda."

I told him, "I must pray to my God, and I'm not interested in how other people look at it."

"Then we should isolate you in a separate cell," he said.

"Whatever you decide. I am a prisoner and I have no right to choose the place of my confinement, but wherever I am, I shall pray."

"What do you pray for?" he asked quite unexpectedly.

"For different things. I have been separated from my family for months now. They don't know where I am, nor I where they are. I pray that God may take care of us. You know that the conditions in the prison are hard. I pray that God may give me strength to endure with patience and not to grumble."

"How long is your prayer?" he continued.

"We do not have written prayers. My prayer is over when I have said to God everything I want to."

"Write down all this in a report and give it to me," he said.

I wrote the report as asked, and continued to pray without further problems.

In prison I realized that we have the mightiest weapon given to us by God. PRAYER. ■

about prayer

Rev. Tran Dinh Ai (Paul Ai) and six evangelists were arrested and imprisoned on May 7 during a three-day training seminar held for 20 pastors near Hanoi. After several days of detailed questioning, the six were released. Paul remained in custody. This letter from the Rev. Paul Ai expresses his thanks for all who worked and prayed for his release.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
June 14, 1999

Dear friends around the world:

Greetings in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from Vietnam.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you that have been praying very hard for me and then raised your voices to help me get out of the bad situation in Hanoi.

I was free on May 31st, after paying the fine, but I am still waiting to get my belongings back. I then spent time with our local leaders on our wedding anniversary. My wife and I flew back to Ho Chi Minh City on the evening of June 4th.

Before I tell you the story, I would like to send you my special appreciation of your love and concern as you prayed, called me on the phone, sent me faxes and also letters to the Vietnamese government. All of that really comforted and encouraged me as I was very sick and had a headache during the time I was kept in Hanoi.

In helping disciple our local pastors of the northern district on the 6th of May, I flew to Hanoi and taught 20 local pastors on the "Andrew level" (ICC Course) in a hotel.

At 5:00 p.m. on May 7th, police came to our room while we are studying the Word of God in the Christian service course called "The Responsibility of the Christian."

Police accused us of exercising Christian religious activity without permission, and after making a detailed report, they took all of us to the police station. I and six others were sent to jail; they kept us there until midnight of May 9th.

On May 10th all were sent back to their local areas, but Lo Van Hen was sent to the police station of his hometown in Ai Ben AP (the city where he was [in] prison for the past three years, having just been released at the end of January 1999. His wife Nguyen Thai was deported out of Hen's village to her home area.)

They kept questioning me until May 18. At this time I became very sick, and just lay on the bed, but still they came into my room and questioned me, but I was not able to answer.

Because your voices were raised outside Vietnam, they eased up the strong pressure on me, then finally on the 31st, they decided to release me.

Thank God during this time I was able to share the gospel of Jesus and my faith with many of the officers and on my wedding anniversary there were four who were saved.

Now my health is recovered, so please pray the paper-work process will go smoothly (I have applied to leave Vietnam).

Thank you very much for all the things that you have done for me. May God bless you.

Your brother in Christ,

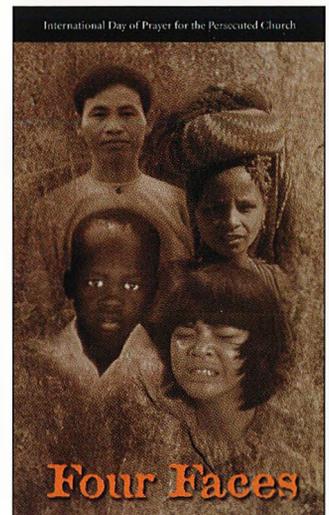
Paul Ai

New Film Spotlights Persecution Worldwide

The film, *Four Faces*, contains actual footage from the countries of Vietnam, Sudan, Philippines (for Saudi Arabia), and Indonesia. Narrated by CNN's chief news anchor,

David Goodman, this video serves as a passport to some of the most restrictive nations on earth. Filmed in four segments of approximately five minutes each, this powerful video is well suited for use in churches, study groups, and homes.

The next **International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church** is **Nov. 14, 1999**. A resource packet featuring the video, *Four Faces*, is available for a suggested donation of \$15.00. Order at the Prayer for the Persecuted Church Web site, www.persecutedchurch.org, or call 888-LETS PRAY (888-538-7772).



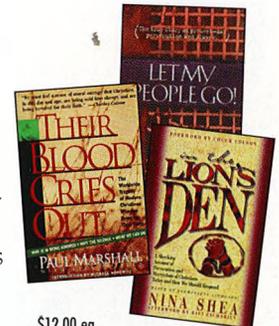
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE ERLC:

Their Blood Cries Out

In more than 60 countries worldwide, Christians are harassed, abused, arrested, tortured, or executed. Paul Marshall tells of modern Christians who are dying for their faith.

BKBL0 (335 pages)

\$12.00 ea.



In The Lion's Den

More people have died for their faith this century than in the previous 19 centuries combined. Nina Shea shares what's happening and what America's Christians must do.

BKLI0 (125 pages)

Reduced! \$6.50 ea.

Let My People Go

The gripping, heartrending, sometimes infuriating account of a 1997 mission to return Sudanese slaves to their southern homeland, buy them, and set them free in the name of the Lord.

BKPE0 (192 pages)

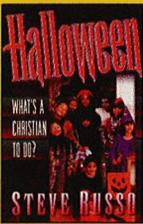
\$12.99 ea.

For ordering information, see page 14.

Nov. 14, 1999

What Will You Do With Halloween?

Steve Russo is an evangelist, author, and host of the nationally syndicated radio program, *Real Answers*. His books include *Halloween: What's a Christian to Do?* and *Keeping Christ in Christmas: Helping Families Find Their Focus*.



Harvest House Publishers, 1998. \$6.99
ISBN: 1-56507-851-9

BY STEVE RUSSO

When it comes to Halloween, Christians must strive to achieve a balance between "conforming to the pattern of this world" (Rom. 12:2) and ignoring it. Jesus said that we are "the light of the world" and are to be influencers for His Kingdom. Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage (Matt. 5:13, *The Message*).

In regard to Halloween, the fundamental issue for Christians is, "What would Jesus want us to do?"

A VIEW FROM THE BOOK

After being interviewed dozens of times on radio and television, I am convinced I have heard the best and worst advice that people have to offer on Halloween. However, it's not important what others think. What matters is what God says in His Word.

Halloween needs to be examined in light of biblical truth. There are no passages that specifically mention trick-or-treating, costume parties, or pumpkin carving. Yet there are solid principles that can enable us to respond in a way that pleases God and is positive for our families.

PRINCIPLES FOR DISCERNING

1. Not Everything is Constructive

God has given everyone the freedom to choose. Knowing how far to exercise this liberty can sometimes be difficult.

Some of you say, "We can do whatever we want to!" But I tell you that not everything we do is good or helpful (1 Cor. 10:23 CEV).

We have liberty in all things not specifically mentioned in the Bible as sinful. This freedom must be exercised in such a way as to build up our spiritual life and encourage others.

It's clear that believers should not celebrate Halloween; but what about participating in an alternative? Halloween provides a great opportunity to be "salt and light" through alternatives.

2. Guard Against Unholy Practices

Allowing children to dress up as clowns or angels to go trick-or-treating does not mean that they are diving into the occult. But how can we guard against subtle practices that should be avoided?

Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God (Deut. 18:10-13 NIV).

As Christians wrestle with what to do on Halloween, some families are considering alternatives that turn trick-or-treating into opportunities to share Christ. (See page 11.)



Going Against the Flow

Many Christian families wrestle with what to do on Halloween. Do we allow our children to don masks portraying friendly little animals, going door-to-door in search of confectionary treats? Do we bundle up the youngsters and head off to church for an alternate celebration of God's harvest blessings? Or do we gather the family in the back room with shades drawn and a solitary lamp lit, and pray no little visitor has the courage to walk up to a darkened stoop to ring the doorbell? Below are alternatives to consider:

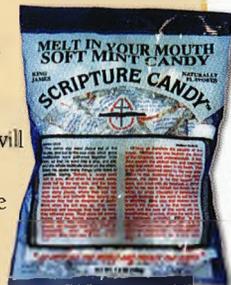
- ✦ **REVERSE DOOR-TO-DOOR EVANGELISM:** When trick-or-treaters come to your home, give them candy and a Gospel tract.
- ✦ **REFORMATION DAY COSTUME PARTY:** On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation. Invite children to a "Reformation Day" costume party. Award prizes for the most creative costume. After games and refreshments, explain the Reformation and share the Gospel.
- ✦ **HARVEST FESTIVAL:** Plan a church festival, where children are encouraged to wear non-ghoulish costumes and receive candy at each game booth. A "trunk-or-treat" in the parking lot, could also be included. Car trunks are filled with candy and children get "treats" at each one.
- ✦ **FAMILY NIGHT:** Plan a special family night at home with a favorite dinner and fun activities. Or have a family outing, finishing the evening with a special dessert.

Brian Atkins sees All-Hallows Eve as a unique opportunity to reach out with a scriptural message of hope and redemption without leaving your house.

"The fields are white unto harvest," says Atkins, developer of Scripture Candy, recalling Jesus' command to His followers to spread the gospel to the lost. "And they are coming right up to our door."

The cellophane wrapper of the peppermint candy, manufactured by the well-known candy-maker Bob's Candies, is emblazoned with Scripture verses. The candy provides a message that children going door-to-door on Halloween will carry back into their homes, "reaching the world one piece at a time," Atkins says.

"If we can plant the Word in their treat bag, the parents will see it," Atkins explains. "We don't know where these little candies will go."



Scripture Candy is available in retail Christian bookstores, including LifeWay stores. Churches interested in bulk sales for fund-raising using Scripture Candy can call 1-888-317-7333. Scripture Candy also has similarly wrapped candy canes and Andes chocolates. Visit them at their Web site: www.scripturecandy.com.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Use this as a starting point for evaluating Halloween alternatives. Also check to see if any occult-related items may have been brought into your house. It could be decorations, costumes, or even coloring books. As innocent as these may seem, we must get rid of them so as to not have that influence in our homes.

3. Stay Focused on What is Good and Pure

There is a battle raging for our minds and emotions. What we put into our minds determines our lifestyle.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things (Phil. 4:8 NIV).

We must be careful what we put into our minds through the media, games, and the Internet.

With network programmers pulling out the stops at Halloween, television is a good place to start in guarding against harmful input.

4. Sidestep All Evil

Evil often appears to be more noticeable during Halloween. God is very clear on His attitude towards evil.

Avoid every kind of evil
(1 Thess. 5:22 NIV).

When considering a Halloween alternative, everything from masks to games to decorations must be carefully evaluated through the filter of God's Word.

5. Be Aware of the Battle

The Bible is clear that the war between God and Satan is real.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual

forces of evil in the heavenly realms
(Eph. 6:12).

Our greatest enemy is not in the world we see, corrupt and wicked as it is, but it is in the world we cannot see.

RESPECTING DIFFERENT OPINIONS

There will always be differing opinions on how to respond to Halloween. At times we will have to "agree to disagree" with other believers on how to respond to this issue.

However we respond to Halloween, we need to guard against compromising biblical principles. 1 Corinthians 10:31 reminds us: *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God* (NIV). The Lord must so saturate our lives that all we do is for His glory — from the most non-spiritual things of life like eating and drinking — to responding to issues like Halloween. ■



Gospel tracts designed for distribution on Halloween are available from Good News Publishers (toll free 1-877-872-2871).

Has the Kingdom Some of Its Magic

▲ Moving to shore up its faltering home-video unit, Walt Disney Co. plans to begin releasing its animated films on digital video disk, after years of holding back its most valuable movie assets from the two-year-old format. . . . Disney also is weighing a strategic shift in its video operations that would make many of its animated movies available all the time. That would be a major departure from the company's long-time strategy of rotating its animated films in stores, keeping each title off the market for a period of seven to 10 years. . . . Both the DVD launch and the new video-release strategy come as Disney's earnings have been declining, prompting the company to put many of its operations under a microscope. Reviving the video unit as a cash cow would go a long way toward solving the company's current woes. A big unanswered question is whether the unit's woes can be fixed by marketing tactics, or reflect a broader decline in the appeal of Disney movies. . . . Prompting the move, in part, is the fact that some re-releases have been disappointments. For example, the original 1992 video release of the animated version of *101 Dalmatians* sold 11.8 million units. A re-release earlier this year has sold another 5.7 million units, below Disney's projections. While the original reached 22% of households with VCRs, the current release has reached just 4% of VCR households.

The Wall Street Journal, Aug. 17, 1999

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

A Just Cause: Why Boycott Disney?

The scenes executives at The Disney Company would rather you not see are collected on this video, presenting a compelling case for supporting the Disney boycott—sordid facts about a company that many have trusted for years. The video features Richard Land, James Dobson, Adrian Rogers, and Don Wildmon addressing the new Disney agenda, with clips from several of Disney's productions which promote the homosexual agenda and smear the institution of the traditional family.

VTDIS (VHS, 30 min.)

\$14.95 ea.

Send a Message to Mickey

Not sure where you stand on the Disney boycott? Before you dismiss the idea as narrow and unfruitful, explore the Magic Kingdom's seamier side as authors Richard Land and Frank York introduce the newest members of the Disney family—films that cram violence and sexual perversion into an evening's entertainment, plus theme park events and corporate policies that undermine the family. Get the facts. . . and do what you can to urge a childhood friend to return to its family roots.

BKSEN (87 pages)

\$4.95 ea.



▲ R-rated films accounted for 65% of The Disney Company's releases in 1997, up from 40% in 1993.

▲ A video surreptitiously filmed in the Mannequin nightclub at the Walt Disney World Resort in Central Florida caught the attention of Disney executives. The film captured two male performers at the club simulating sex acts onstage while the audience cheered. The incident occurred in June during the annual Gay Days event at Disney. Company spokesman said the two were Disney employees and that the company would take action against those responsible for scripting the affair, saying the behavior was "inappropriate conduct."

▲ ABC News raised eyebrows of even its peers earlier this year by canning a news story critical of its parent company, The Disney Company. The story involved accounts of pedophilia and lax security at the company's theme park resorts. The story was slated to run on the network's *20/20*, ABC's news magazine program.

▲ The USA Radio Network reports that Disney's catering to the homosexual community has resulted in at least 50% fewer families attending during Gay Days. Observers from the Florida Family Association witnessed about 600 families, mostly young adults with children in hand, rapidly exiting Disney World within two hours of the park's opening. A number of those leaving expressed disgust at the antics of the homosexual patrons to the park. *Tampa Tribune* columnist Steve Otto, who had taken his family to Disney World during Gay Days, observed: "Gay Day is a political statement. It's thousands of men and women. . . groping and grabbing their way from one fantasy land to the other. . . What they were saying was that if you didn't like their vulgarity, then you were somehow a smaller person."

Culture Facts, Aug. 5, 1999

▲ Waving drawings of Mickey Mouse with dollar signs in his eyes, activists protested at a Disney children's show today against alleged abusive labor conditions in factories producing Disney products. As families lined up to watch Mickey's Magical Tour and buy merchandise from the sponsor, Disney Consumer Products, seven members of the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee protested outside the Hong Kong Convention Center. "We want Hong Kong people to know exactly what happens in the production of the Disney products," said Chan Ka-wai, the group's associate director.

Associated Press, Aug. 5, 1999

m Lost gic?

▲ Business Week's Performance Rankings of the Standard & Poor 500 rated Disney in the middle of the pack, earning poor ratings in annual sales and profit growth and barely average ratings in return on investment and net margin. The magazine reported recently that the company's stock continues to lose ground, dropping 5% in the first half of 1999. First quarter earnings were 35% below what they were a year ago. Likewise, income for the second quarter of 1999 fell to \$367 million, down from \$415 million the year before.

Culture Facts, Aug. 5, 1999

▲ Disney's Creative Content division, which includes the film studio, videos, and consumer products, is suffering from weaker demand for its toys and fewer home videos. Division earnings in fiscal 1999 could be down by \$300 million, says a recent report by Goldman Sachs analyst Richard Simon. "It's been a difficult time for Disney. I'm sure they're preparing for the turnaround," says Edward Jones analyst Linda Bannister.

USA Today, June 11, 1999

▲ Last year, of the six major animated movies released, only two were produced by Disney. This summer, in addition to *South Park* from Viacom's Paramount studio, Time Warner Bros. released *Iron Giant*. Dreamworks SKG, who produced *The Prince of Egypt*, will release two animated features next year: *The Road to El Dorado* and *Chicken Run*.

USA Today, June 11, 1999

▲ Disney chairman Michael Eisner, in a three-page letter to the company's shareholders in January, reflected on Disney's disappointing 1998 box office: "[I]n too many instances, profits did not materialize from the revenues achieved by our films. Stated more bluntly, either the films and marketing cost too much, or the audience rejected our ideas. Whatever the reason, we're glad fiscal '98 is over in this area." Additionally, Eisner was quoted in media reports as saying Disney plans to release more family-oriented films in 1999.

Baptist Press, July 14, 1999

Disney Moves Ahead With Film About Students Kidnapping Teacher

Thurs., August 19, 1999

By Ken Walker (BP)

After last April's mass murder at the suburban Denver school, Miramax Films postponed the May release of *Killing Mrs. Tingle*. The Disney subsidiary has since changed the film's title to *Teaching Mrs. Tingle* and slated its premiere for Aug. 20.

The plot, described by one reviewer as a "black comedy," involves a would-be valedictorian whose chance for a college scholarship may be ruined by her history teacher's accusation of cheating. Miramax's Internet site calls the film "wicked," while an advertisement in the Aug. 15 *Los Angeles Times* promises, "This Friday, three students are about to get even with the teacher from hell."

"Just about the time we think we've pushed the envelope, we push it a little further," said Darrell Scott, father of Rachel Joy Scott, one of the 12 students killed at Columbine. "I'm just amazed at how we've taken God away from our kids in school and filled it with violence at school and in movies and with video games."

In addition to the Christian community, the movie has been condemned by the nation's largest teacher organization. National Education Association President Bob Chase wrote to Miramax in June to register a strong objection on behalf of NEA's 2.4 million members.

Chase also attacked The Disney Company during his annual convention speech in early July. Noting that slain Columbine teacher Dave Saunders was to be honored by the NEA that afternoon, the teachers' union leader said, "It defies belief, but Miramax studio is set to release a movie about students who plan and carry out an attack on a public school teacher."

Recounting that the film's original title was *Killing Mrs. Tingle*, Chase said, "After Columbine, they changed the name to *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*. What in the world do they mean? The attackers are going to teach Mrs. Tingle a lesson? It takes your breath away, doesn't it? Does the market god have no sense of responsibility? No decency? No shame?" ■

"I want you to understand, I am not an activist and am not anti-movie, but this movie goes beyond the pale. The original title was *Killing Mrs. Tingle*, and the students in it kidnapped, tortured, and murdered the teacher. But after *Columbine*, the studio renamed it and filmed a different ending."

Susan Clarius, mother of two and substitute school teacher in Grant Parish, La., whose efforts resulted in area theaters declining to show the movie, *Killing Mrs. Tingle* (as reported in Baptist Press)

CROSS—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The notion that there is a "wall of separation" that allows a rock concert but forbids the singing of hymns in the same park is a construct that modern liberals have used to try to silence the voice of Christians. The idea that a child drawing a picture of the nativity scene on a school chalkboard constitutes government sanction of religion is, of course, absurd. But a secular state will always be hostile to religion and seek to limit its influence.

Where did the idea of religious freedom come from? Most of our textbooks trace it back to the 18th century enlightenment, when advances in science and communication changed the western world. However, as we have already noted, the seeds of freedom were planted in the Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on individual conversion and the freedom of conscience.

Was America a Christian nation? No nation is Christian; the number of true believers is always a minority in any country, America included. Nations do have, however, varying degrees of Christian influence. America was founded as a religious nation, but not necessarily a Christian one. The debates that took place between the early leaders of our country were replete with references to God, but not to Christ. The fact that only about 10% of the population attended church during the time of the American revolution is proof enough that America has never been distinctively Christian.

Some of our founding fathers were committed Christians, but they were a minority. Most believed in God but would not have affirmed the deity of Christ, His atoning death on the cross, and His resurrection and ascension. Even when they prayed, it was not to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but to a Deistic God who was comfortable with a broad spectrum of religious convictions.

We have only to recall Benjamin Franklin's attempts to undermine Puritan influence and beliefs in Philadelphia, and Thomas Jefferson, who removed all courses on the Christian faith from the curriculum at the University of Virginia. He also created his own New Testament, cutting from it every miracle. These examples remind us that not all the founding fathers were Christian. Religious, yes; Christian, no.

Is it possible to believe in any religion (or no religion, for that matter) and still be a good American citizen? Can you honor the flag even

if you don't believe in God? The founding fathers answered that an atheist can still be a bona fide American citizen. But at the same time they believed that the populace could not maintain such freedoms without the underpinnings of religion. Freedom, they believed, would be so abused by the irreligious that the nation would eventually rot. Without widespread belief in transcendent values, freedom would turn into anarchy, and morality into personal self-interest. Thus America was profoundly influenced by Judeo-Christian values.

The Christian influence in America is eroding daily. Opinion polls show that most Americans believe in God, but many live as practical atheists, paying little attention to the Bible as God's revelation. The proliferation of New Age thought, the radical individualism that clamors for personal rights, and the privatization of morality tears at the very fabric of our families and institutions. Humanism is now coming to its logical conclusions in education, law, and morality. The result is as bad as the founding fathers imagined it might be.

What shall we do?

Should we try to turn the clock back to the supposed "good old days," when we had a shared morality, a widespread respect for God, and the belief that truth did actually exist? We long for a nation without drugs, abortion on demand, and occultism in our newsstands and television programs. We long for a return to the days when people were embarrassed about adultery and when movies adhered to a minimal standard of decency.

Our first inclination may be to lash out, insisting that it is time to "take this country back." But, unfortunately, such a mentality betrays the fact that we just might not understand how we got here in the first place. Besides, when we are angry, it is possible to do the wrong thing. We are not in a cultural war but a spiritual conflict. Thus we must fight in God's way and with God's weapons.

The Bible has the answer. This is not the first time that the church has had the responsibility of representing Christ when society as a whole has abandoned God. We must recapture the church as an institution for renewal rather than simply an agent for bitter confrontation.

Specifically, we must understand the proper relationship between the cross and the flag, between God and Caesar. We must be able to distinguish the Christian dream from the American dream. ■

NOTICE

You may have received your copy of the July/August *Light* magazine late. Unfortunately, a serious problem with the mailing labels necessitated the vendor responsible for the mail processing of the magazine to reprint and mail the magazine a second time.

We sincerely apologize for this problem.

The Next Great Army of Missionaries, Pastors, and Church Leaders May Step Forward December 29-31, 1999

Over one thousand church and denominational leaders at every level are in final preparations for YouthLink 2000. They share one conviction – that God intends to call out a literal tidal wave of pastors, missionaries, and church leaders for the new millennium. They believe thousands of students will so sense a call of God for the future that they will begin now winning their campuses to Christ. The zeal of such students will have a revival impact on their churches that sent them to YouthLink 2000.

Will your students miss it all?

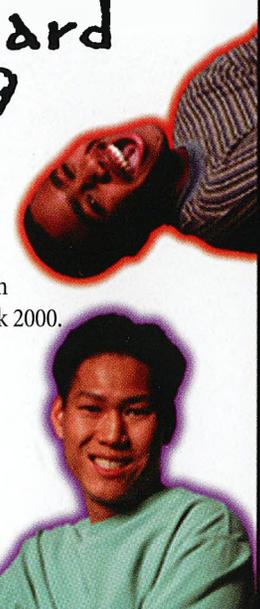
For details, see www.youthlink2000.org.

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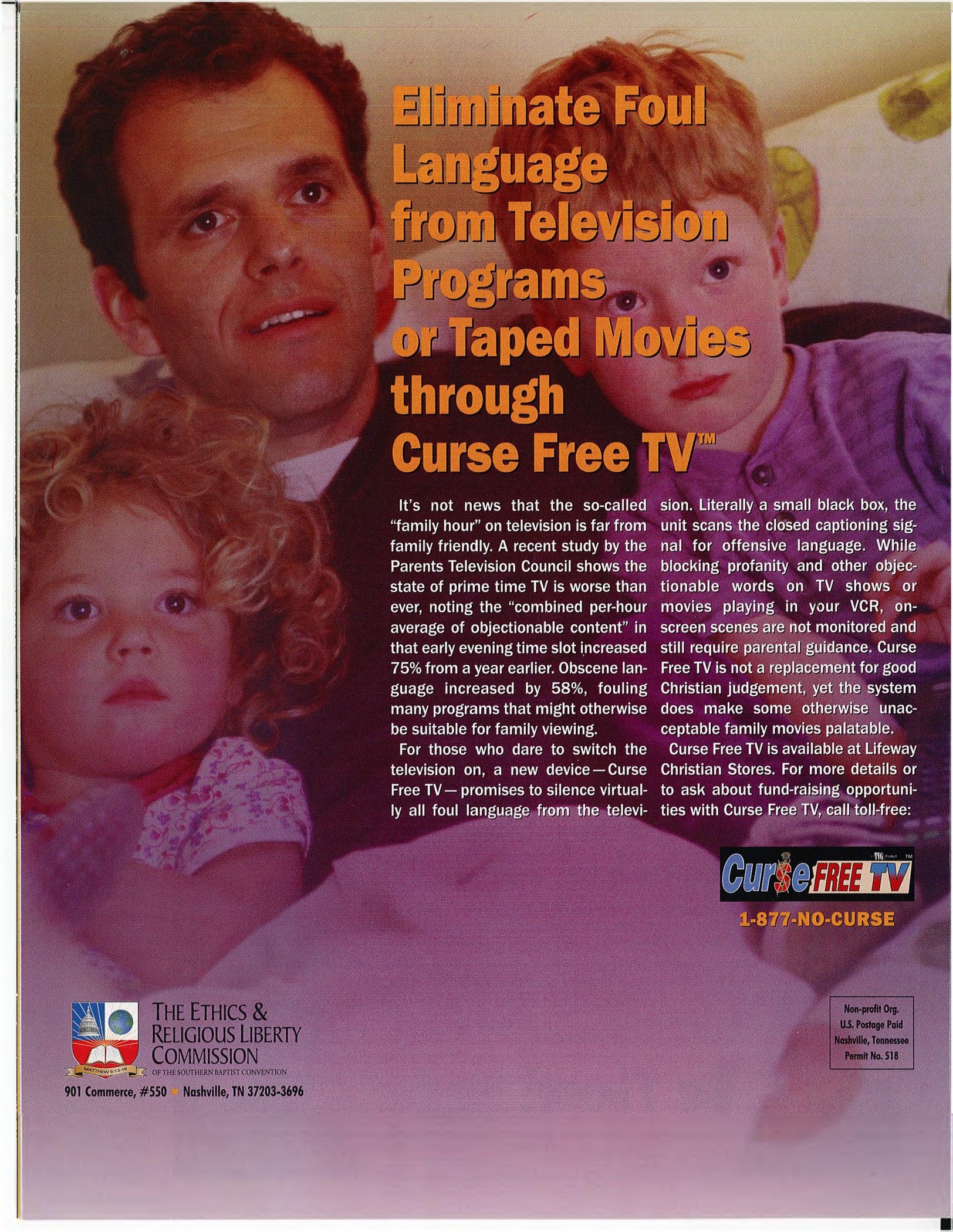


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Locations:

- ANAHEIM, CA
Convention Center
- ATLANTA, GA
Georgia World Congress Center
- DENVER, CO
Convention Center
- HOUSTON, TX
Astro Dome
- PHILADELPHIA, PA
Convention Center
- ST. LOUIS, MO
TransWorld Dome
- TAMPA, FL
Ice Palace

More commitments to sexual purity and to abstinence from drugs and alcohol may be made at YouthLink 2000 than at any ministry event in history.



Eliminate Foul Language from Television Programs or Taped Movies through Curse Free TV™

It's not news that the so-called "family hour" on television is far from family friendly. A recent study by the Parents Television Council shows the state of prime time TV is worse than ever, noting the "combined per-hour average of objectionable content" in that early evening time slot increased 75% from a year earlier. Obscene language increased by 58%, fouling many programs that might otherwise be suitable for family viewing.

For those who dare to switch the television on, a new device—Curse Free TV—promises to silence virtually all foul language from the televi-

sion. Literally a small black box, the unit scans the closed captioning signal for offensive language. While blocking profanity and other objectionable words on TV shows or movies playing in your VCR, on-screen scenes are not monitored and still require parental guidance. Curse Free TV is not a replacement for good Christian judgement, yet the system does make some otherwise unacceptable family movies palatable.

Curse Free TV is available at Lifeway Christian Stores. For more details or to ask about fund-raising opportunities with Curse Free TV, call toll-free:



1-877-NO-CURSE



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