

# BAPTIST FEATURES

PRODUCED BY BAPTIST PRESS  
NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

127 NINTH AVE., N., NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE AL 4-1631

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January 31, 1962

Editors: This is the eighteenth in the Series on SBC agencies.

Commission Helps Apply  
Gospel To Daily Living

By Ross Coggins  
for Baptist Press

"Growing Strength Of Communism Evident." So ran the headline of a leading newspaper article. Millions of Americans read it, felt vaguely frustrated and wondered what could be done about it.

"Racial Violence Erupts at Bus Station," was the caption beneath an ugly picture. Further perusal of the newspapers revealed headlines announcing police pay-offs, climbing divorce statistics, big business price fixing, labor union corruption, and teen-age crime.

Daily newspapers are full of such headlines, harsh weekday realities we often forget when we worship on Sunday. Is there any connection between these headlines and our Sunday worship?

The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention grew out of the conviction that unless every part of the Christian's witness is undergirded by Christian morality, it is incomplete and ineffectual. It is the responsibility of the Christian Life Commission to speak to (not for) Southern Baptists concerning the application of Christian principles to everyday life.

The Commission projects its ministry in the field of applied Christianity in five general areas: family life, race relations, moral issues, daily work and citizenship. It does this largely through writing, preaching, special conferences for Baptist leadership and cooperation with state Christian Life Commissions, of which there are now 22.

It is from these state Commissions that the Christian Life Commission expects a significant breakthrough in getting the emphasis on applied Christianity to all Southern Baptists. At the state level, the Commissions aid the cause by emphasizing Christian social ethics on state convention programs, through resolutions, in encampments, among student groups, and on associational workers conference programs.

The Commission's executive secretary-treasurer is Foy Valentine of Nashville. In answer to an inquiry from the chairman of deacons in a pastorless church, "Would you be interested in getting back into the ministry?" he replied, "The Christian Life Commission provides what is for me the most significant ministry on earth. It is in truth the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In the course of trying to help Southern Baptists to carry into every area of life the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, Valentine averages preaching about four times a week.

Annual Christian Life Conferences are held each summer at Ridgcrest, N. C., and Glorieta, N. M., Baptist assemblies. Among last year's leaders for conferences on "Christian Answers to Family Problems" was David R. Mace, Madison, N. J., considered by many the world's foremost authority on family life. The subject for 1962 summer conferences will be "Christianity and Communism."

Southern Baptists have also instructed the Christian Life Commission to provide a nongovernmental observer to the United Nations.

The Commission in 1961 cooperated with American Baptists and National Baptists in sponsoring a special seminar on "The United Nations and Foreign Policy." At this meeting in New York, Baptist editors, denominational workers, lay people and pastors studied issues before the United Nations.

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Southern Baptists frequently call on the Christian Life Commission at 161-8th Ave. No., Nashville, for help. A Brotherhood president requested special materials for a program on moral issues. The Commission sent its pamphlet, "Christian Principles Applied to Moral Problems," some literature on beverage alcohol, two tracts on gambling and one on juvenile delinquency.

An education director, planning a special program in preparation for a forthcoming election, requested material in the field of Christian citizenship. He was sent the booklet, "Christianity and Political Action," a compilation of messages from the 1960 summer conferences.

A pastor wrote for advice in his efforts to remove indecent literature from the magazine racks of his city. A special packet of materials was sent to him by return mail, defining the issues, listing by titles the offensive publications and laying out a plan of action.

An association requested authoritative information concerning alcoholism. The commission, which has six pamphlets dealing with this, sent these to the association.

A foreign missionary urged the commission to use every means to inform Southern Baptists how race prejudice in the homeland compromises their witness to other races. Out of this request was developed a pamphlet entitled, "Race Relations: A Factor in World Missions." Over 80,000 of these have been distributed.

Recently there has been great interest in the whole field of communism. Among the Commission's information designed to help Southern Baptists have been four articles on communism for the state Baptist papers, four adult Training Union lessons, helping to prepare a study course book and printing two tracts on communism.

Not all Southern Baptists agree with all the commission's emphases. One association requested the Southern Baptist Convention to abolish the Christian Life Commission because of its statements on some controversial issues. Southern Baptists, however, have asked the Commission to continue its work in these fields.

Ten million Southern Baptists, making the gospel apply to every area of life, could cause the headlines to bear a different story: "Divorce Trend Reversed," "Weakening of Communism Evident," and "New Accord in Racial Dilemma."

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Outline:

AVAILABLE TRACTS--Mrs. Joyce York, office secretary employed by the SBC Christian Life Commission in Nashville, checks a rack displaying tracts produced by the agency. The tracts cover subjects assigned to the commission by the Convention. (BP) Photo.

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