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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a five-part series on contemporary moral issues and the law written by Harry N. Hollis, Ph. D., director of family and special moral concerns of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Legalized Prostitution:
Journey Into Moral Madness**

By Harry N. Hollis, Jr
for Baptist Press

A Southern Baptist pastor recently appeared at a public hearing in Nevada to testify against an ordinance which would make prostitution legal in his county. He spoke strongly against the ordinance, and he assumed that he would be joined by other community leaders. But most of them refused. The ordinance passed.

What happened in Nevada may soon happen throughout the country unless responsible citizens get involved now in protecting the moral health of their communities. Some people have defended prostitution as a necessary evil or as a positive good, but previously these defenders have been the exceptions. Now, however, their number is increasing.

To most Christians, the legalization of prostitution is moral madness. All prostitution, including legalized prostitution, is immoral. To prevent prostitution from becoming legal throughout the nation we must seek to understand what is happening and work to diminish it everywhere.

Should prostitution be legalized? Some people think so. Here are some answers to arguments offered in support of legalization:

1. "Prostitution is the oldest profession in recorded history. It cannot be stopped so it might as well be taxed. Governments can certainly use the revenue." This is a defeatist approach. And it's a morally flimsy one. Shall we tax every activity that is likely to bring in some money? Certainly not! Any government that has to depend on the taxation of prostitution for survival does not deserve to exist.

2. "The legalization of prostitution will enable government to stop the spread of venereal disease by seeing that the prostitutes get regular checkups." We should show concern about the incredibly serious venereal disease epidemic in this country. But legalizing prostitution will not change the picture that much. Careful health checks will not prevent prostitutes from spreading venereal diseases between checkups. Most venereal disease in this country does not come from prostitutes anyway.

3. "Prostitution is a victimless crime which should not be controlled by laws." That's absurd! Exploited and abused prostitutes are certainly victims. Paying customers are victims of a dishonest sexual charade. Families of participants in prostitution are unfortunate victims. Indeed, society itself is the victim of the sordid business of prostitution.

4. "Legalizing prostitution will protect both prostitutes and their customers from violence." Nonsense! The best way to eliminate violence is not to legalize prostitution. People who want to stop violence should be concerned with trying to stop prostitution, which certainly does violence to bodies and spirits.

Here are some arguments against legalization:

1. Prostitution should not be legalized because the government must not be a partner in such a degrading business. It must not participate in sexual exploitation and moral sickness. Can a government in such a dirty business demand respect from its citizens? Certainly not.

2. Even if all prostitution cannot be eliminated from society, the law should uplift moral ideals. Stealing will always exist. Shall we make stealing legal because of this? No! The law should plainly demonstrate that improper behavior is not approved by society.

3. Prostitution leads to the serious exploitation of women, and it should be one of the first areas tackled by all people interested in human liberation. It violates the right of women to be human beings.

4. If prostitution is legalized, it will victimize more and more people. Str etwalkers will get more customers in a central location. Also women on the borderline in their decision about becoming prostitutes may very well be influenced to do so by the fact that it is sanctioned by law.

From a Christian perspective, prostitution must be condemned as a sin because it is a mis-use of the beautiful gift of sex, because it leads to exploitation, deceit, and possibly disease, because it cheapens bodies and spoils spirits, and because it may breakup family structures.

The Bible calls on Christians to be "salt and light" and seek to correct social problems. Something can be done about prostitution. Legalization is not the answer. Here are some things Christians can do:

1. Work for effective laws to govern prostitution. The laws should be aimed not only at the prostitutes but also at their customers. The way to deal with prostitution is not to stop arresting the women but to start arresting the men as well. The laws should also point toward rehabilitation of prostitutes.

2. Encourage community officials to enforce anti-prostitution laws. What is needed is not an occasional crusade against prostitution just before elections are to take place. Rather there must be fair enforcement of these laws throughout the year.

3. Seek to explode the myths about prostitution which are so popular in our society. Hookers are not happy! They are troubled people. Suicide rates are high among them. The glamorous myths about the joys and harmlessness of prostitution must be exploded by people who believe in truth telling. As long as these myths persist, prostitution will continue to exploit people.

4. Work for the rehabilitation of prostitutes. Most prostitutes would do something else if they could find alternatives. Some need job training; most need counseling to help them straighten out their lives. Rehabilitation of prostitutes will not be an easy ministry, but it is a genuine opportunity for Christians to demonstrate Christ's love for people in desperate need.

5. Teach through actions and words the standards of sexual morality set forth in the Scriptures. The Bible teaches that prostitution is a sin. Share the good news that sex expressed in a marriage covenant is a source of joy and pleasure given by God for the enrichment of human life.

Wholesome education about sex through the church can help eliminate some of the problems that might lead people to turn to prostitution. Church libraries should carry Christian books on sex. Young people should be taught about the beauty of sex expressed as God intended. Couples should be given premarital and marital counseling which looks realistically at the process of sexual adjustment in a marriage covenant.

Legalizing prostitution is moral madness. Strong laws against prostitution are needed, but laws are not enough. Christians must demonstrate in their lives a joyful love which leads to sexual integrity and to compassionate caring for all people in need. (BP)



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Death Toll Doesn't Describe
Horror of Guatemala Quake

By Charlie Warren

GUATEMALA CITY (BP)--The statistics are ghastly--20,000 bodies pulled from the rubble, countless thousands injured, perhaps a million homeless.

But the horror of February's earthquake in Guatemala can't begin to be comprehended without an awareness of the suffering and uncertainty of the living.

Neither does the trauma and suffering rest exclusively with Guatemala's multitude of injured. In an earthquake, everyone suffers--especially the poor.

Many had very little before disaster struck. Now they have nothing.

The drama first began to etch its impression on my mind as I flew into Guatemala City. On the plane with us, fearful of what they would find, were those who had family members in the disaster-stricken Central American nation.

Efforts at communication with their relatives had been futile. Were they dead or alive?

For a fortunate few there was ecstasy as loved ones met them with a warm embrace. Others were not so lucky.

The second nightmare hit me later the same day, hours after nightfall. As we walked among street after street of what used to be adobe homes, we saw thousands of people sleeping in the streets--in cars, in makeshift tents or in tin and cardboard lean-tos.

Our guide, A. Clark Scanlon, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's field representative for Middle America, made a disturbing observation.

For these people, he said, there's always been security in a roof and four walls. Now, even if the house is still standing, the roof and walls are objects to be feared. One more tremor may well be all it would take.

So, the people seek refuge in the streets.

An earthquake is so unpredictable--so uncontrollable. The victim is so utterly helpless.

Things that have always been considered permanent are proven to be temporary. The earth, taken for granted as a solid foundation, quivers under the feet.

When calm is nearly restored, another tremor causes widespread panic. Will the next one be the worst yet?

To whom does one turn in such a crisis?

Scanlon told of one woman who dropped to her knees in the middle of the street--turning in desperation to God. She is somewhat typical of many who are turning to spiritual values.

For many, spiritual guidance came, along with food, shelter and medical care, from Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers who ministered to broken bones, hungry stomachs and panic-stricken souls.

FMB Writes President Ford About CIA;
Sends \$100,000 to Guatemala

RICHMOND (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has sent a letter to President Gerald R. Ford requesting him "to take whatever steps are necessary, as soon as possible, to make clear, in our country and abroad, that missionaries and clergy throughout the world are not to be used by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or any other intelligence agency of our government."

In view of recent public concern about reported use of missionaries by the CIA, the board also adopted a policy statement reaffirming its long-standing position of non-involvement of missionaries in political affairs.

The board statement on the CIA reads, "Missionaries are to maintain carefully their role of spiritual ministry, refraining from any relationship with intelligence operations of any nation (including the United States) or with political movements in the nations where they serve. They are to avoid anything that might make unclear their purpose of Christian witness and service and thus jeopardize their witness for Christ."

In other action in its February meeting the board appropriated \$125,000 for relief, including \$100,000 for earthquake-stricken Guatemala.

The other funds appropriated included \$11,000 for Lebanon to rebuild churches and care for some war refugees, \$10,000 for a permanent medical kit for disaster relief to be kept available for immediate use, and two different \$2,000 appropriations for inoculation guns for Colombia and Guatemala to be used in disease control.

In a report to the board, Baker J. Cauthen, executive secretary, expressed gratitude for relief funds given by Southern Baptists which made possible immediate emergency assistance to Guatemala, including distribution of food, sending of medical supplies, a team of doctors and 500 tents to provide shelter for the homeless.

Paul D. Stotts of Richmond was elected board attorney. He succeeds John Williams who will soon retire.

Stotts was educated in Richmond at the University of Richmond and the T. C. Williams Law School. A member of Bon Air Baptist Church, he is a former assistant attorney general and currently engaged in a private law practice in Richmond.

The board awarded a medical receptorship to Gregory J. Mincey. Mincey, a student at Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, Ga., will stay on the mission field for 10 weeks working alongside missionary doctors.

NOTE: The board's entire letter to President Ford will be mailed to Baptist state paper editors.