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**Pornography: A Cancer  
That Plagues America**

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By Harry N. Hollis, Jr.  
for Baptist Press

Christians are confronted with many serious social problems today, great issues such as hunger, war, poverty, and pollution. In light of pressing social crises is the pornography problem important enough to demand our energy?

Christians aware of the harmful effect of pornography will answer, "Yes, we must give time and energy to oppose pornography." Indeed this is one of many contemporary problems demanding our most careful thought and action.

If you doubt the seriousness of the pornography problem, look at the magazines and paperbacks at most local drugstores and newsstands. Material once sold secretly is now openly displayed where even children can easily pick it up. The pictures and themes often violate all standards of decency and wholesomeness.

Today, many people say pornography is at worst a nuisance which affects no one except perhaps the people who view or read it. Therefore, they say there should be no laws governing it.

In truth, pornography is more than a nuisance. It can do real harm to individuals and to the society which legalizes it. We will examine, therefore, some reasons for opposing the legalization of pornography and will also suggest additional ways to combat it.

First, look at three reasons sometimes given in support of the legalization of pornography, along with some answers to these arguments.

1. "Pornography should be legal because the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is opposed to censorship." On the contrary, the Supreme Court has held that obscenity is not protected by the First Amendment. It is certainly difficult at times to determine just what is legally obscene, but the First Amendment was not written to protect obscenity.

2. "Pornography should be legal because it does not harm anyone. It is at worst a victimless crime which keeps law enforcement people from battling more serious crimes." It is nonsense to say that pornography is not harmful. It distorts a healthy understanding of sex, demeans the family, undermines morality, debases males and females, and warps character. It affects individuals and society. Instead of pulling police away for the enforcement of pornography laws, communities should have enough police to combat all crimes.

3. "Pornography should be legal because it teaches people to be uninhibited and sophisticated about sex." In truth, pornography distorts the truth about sex. It deals in fantasy, not reality. It cheapens sex and leads to hang-ups, not to freedom. There are plenty of wholesome books about sex today. We do not need to resort to pornography for information.

Having looked at why some people support the legalization of pornography, let's discuss why it should not be legalized:

1. Pornography undermines the moral standards of a community. It pictures moral decadence and opposes the faithful monogamy necessary to a community's moral health. If people model their lives after those pictured in pornography, the family would disintegrate. Pornography is exploitive. It uses and abuses people. It turns human beings into things. It is a voracious cancer which must not be tolerated.

2. Pornography discriminates against women and lowers a culture's respect for them. It cheapens women, turning them into objects. Pornography's exploitation of women does great damage to a society. People for human liberation should vigorously oppose pornography.

3. Pornography can lead to antisocial acts. A great debate continues over how much effect pornography has on individual behavior. Common sense--which must be used in deliberations about this issue--dictates that what we read and see can affect the way we behave. If, for example, pictures and words in advertising can motivate people to buy goods and services, isn't it also true that pornographic themes can motivate behavior? The answer is "Yes."

Pornography can trigger antisocial acts in sick individuals. And it can precipitate unwholesome experimentation in young people and in adults. It leads to behavior not in a community's best interests.

4. Pornography is frequently tied in with organized crime. It gives organized crime a source of revenue for other activities. Pornography profits are high, and there is much evidence that organized crime is enriching its treasury with the production and sale of obscene literature. Further, gangland violence is sometimes connected with people in the business of producing and distributing pornography. The link between pornography and organized crime is clear and communities must fight it.

Pornography is not harmless. It has many victims and must be controlled. Passing legislation to check pornography is an important responsibility of society. Power must be used to bring about effective controls. Christians should write to elected officials and express support for strong legislation. Law enforcement officials should be encouraged to arrest obscenity law violators.

Legislation by itself, however, won't diminish pornography. Other actions must be taken. The church's responsibility is to provide resources for wholesome sex education, based on biblical teachings and the best scientific insights. Good sex education won't prevent every young person or adult from becoming hooked on pornography. But it will provide a satisfactory alternative to pornography's distortions of sex.

Christians can also work with citizens' groups to combat pornography. By joining with others to exercise "pocketbook power," Christians can help to check pornography. The practice of selective buying can be effective in limiting the sale of pornography in drugstores, groceries, and newsstands.

Proprietors can be politely told that the members of organizations want to trade where clean publications are sold. If changes aren't made, the groups can trade elsewhere. The practice of selective viewing can also be used by groups to persuade theaters to show wholesome entertainment. People are in the pornography business to make money. Economic sanctions through group actions can effectively combat pornography.

Christians can demonstrate that there is an alternative to pornography by announcing the good news about the Christ, who offers an abundant life. The gospel makes the crutch of pornography unnecessary.

We can practice an aggressive evangelism to fight pornography. We can share the good news that through Christ one can replace the superficial pleasures of pornography with the genuine joy that comes when we use the good gift of sex as God intended. This is the ultimate solution to the pornography problem. (BP)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fourth 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 for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Seminary Launches Adams  
Lectureship Series

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WAKE FOREST, N. C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here has inaugurated the Theodore F. Adams Lectureship in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry as an annual four-day event.

The series is named for Theodore F. Adams, former president of the Baptist World Alliance and pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Richmond, Va. Adams came to the seminary after retirement in 1968 to serve for one year as visiting professor of preaching and is now completing his eighth year on the Southeastern faculty.

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Wealthy Baptist Pastor  
Discovers Money Talks

CHESTERFIELD, Va., December, 1775 (BP)--Eleazer Clay, baptized just four years ago as the result of preaching by imprisoned Baptist ministers, was named pastor of the First Baptist Church here.

Doubtless the wealthiest minister in the county, Clay made possible The construction of the Baptist meetinghouse here by his gifts and influence.

In 1771, a friend of Clay's heard the preaching of Baptist evangelists imprisoned at Culpeper jail for preaching without authority of the state church. He was converted and immediately became concerned about Clay, who later became a Christian and was baptized.

Baptists were being bitterly persecuted in Virginia and baptism jeopardized Clay's wealth, influence, and position. In spite of the risks, he was soon preaching Baptist doctrine.

He quickly learned that "money talks" for ministers too. Because of his wealth and position, he was one of the few Baptist ministers in Virginia to escape persecution by civil authorities or the state church.

Clay was threatened at least once, however, when a man rode up to a house where he was preaching and said he was going to horsewhip the minister. A friend of Clay's rushed in to warn him.

"I am the son of Charles Clay," the Baptist declared, "and fear no man. If I have to go out after him, I will give him one of the worst whippings he ever had in his life."

Clay couldn't be intimidated, so the caller left without trying to whip him. The Baptist doubtless was able to make good his own threat. As a boy of 14 he had joined royal troops and fought the French and Indians.

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MasterControl Wins Award  
From Freedoms Foundation

Baptist Press  
3/2/76

FORT WORTH (BP)--"MasterControl"\*, a half-hour radio production of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission here, has received the 1975 Distinguished Service award for a radio program from the Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge, Pa.

"MasterControl"\*, syndicated on 638 stations across the country, is produced for the Radio and Television Commission by Charles Yates.

The show was lauded for "outstanding accomplishment in helping to achieve a better understanding of America and Americans."

The program submitted for judging in the George Washington Freedoms Foundation Awards highlighted the July 4 holiday. It was aired the week beginning June 27 and featured tunes from the Broadway musical, "1776" and paid a radio visit to the "Hall of Presidents" at Disneyworld in Orlando, Fla. Excerpts from the Abraham Lincoln soundtrack there were used in the commentary.

Besides previous Freedoms Foundation Awards, "MasterControl"\* has received numerous industry awards.

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CORRECTION

In next to last graph of Baptist Press story mailed 3/1/76, entitled "Florida Men Help Pick Up The Pieces in Guatemala," change the first two words from Rowell said etc. . . . to Bob Rowell, Florida Baptist Brotherhood director, said . . .