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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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78-45

## Ordination of Homosexuals Unbiblical Professor Says

By Jim Newton

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Ordaining a practicing homosexual to the gospel ministry violates the clear biblical teaching against homosexuality, a Louisville professor told 600 Southern Baptists attending a national seminar sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"As a model for the congregation, the minister is to exemplify the Christian ideal in all areas of life, including sexual behavior," said Henlee L. Barnette, professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Louisville's school of medicine.

Barnette specifically mentioned ordination of a lesbian by the Episcopal bishop of New York, and a 200-page task force report from the United Presbyterian Church approving ordination of practicing homosexuals "if they manifest such gifts as are required" for the ministry.

He pointed out that there is "no single passage in the Scripture that supports sex relations between consenting male adults," but there's general condemnation of the acts of homosexuality in both Old and New Testaments.

Barnette, who also urged compassion for homosexuals, warned that churches should exert the same care in ordaining heterosexuals to the ministry, so that those ordained exemplify the Christian ideal in their sexual behavior.

Every church, Barnette observed, is confronted with the issue of homosexuality, for in almost every church there are ministers, church members, seminarians and denominational leaders who are homosexuals.

"But as in the case of race relations, the churches are getting into the action (of ministering to homosexuals) too late with too little," said Barnette, former Christian ethics professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Although he opposed ordination of homosexuals, Barnette said homosexuals should be admitted to church membership "if they meet the criteria applied to any other prospective member and seek to follow the biblical norms for sexual expression."

Calling for an attitude of love toward the homosexual without condoning the homosexual's actions, Barnette chided Southern Baptists for their traditional attitude toward homosexuals. It has been one of "contempt rather than compassion, rejection rather than redemption," he said.

Barnette urged churches to engage in outreach ministries to homosexuals similar to church ministries to alcoholics and drug abusers and called for churches to work for "the civil rights of all persons regardless of sexual preference."

He drew applause when he stated, "It is incredible that the Southern Baptist Convention . . . would call for the denial of the basic civil rights of a minority group on the basis of sexual orientation."

Barnette was referring to a resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City last June commending Anita Bryant and other Christians during the referendum in Florida's Dade County, "for their courageous stand against the evils inherent in homosexuality." The resolution decried "a campaign being waged to secure legal, social, and religious acceptance for homosexuality and deviant moral behavior at the expense of personal dignity."

The specific language of the resolution doesn't call for denial of civil rights. But Barnette said in an interview later that its wording and its support for Anita Bryant and the Dade County anti-gay rights drive implies denial of such rights.

Earlier in his address, Barnette pointed out that in 31 states, sex between consenting adults of the same sex is a crime, and that penalties for homosexual behavior range from one year to life in prison in some states.

"If churches really believe in the Christian and democratic way of life," said Barnette, "they should work actively to decriminalize laws against homosexual behavior between consenting adults, to eliminate discriminatory laws in employment, housing, and public facilities."

Calling for Christians to love homosexuals as persons, Barnette argued "in the light of love it is wrong to persecute, harass, discriminate against or to destroy any person.... yet the homosexual has suffered such injustices at the hands of society and even the church," he said. "Like blacks and other minority groups, the homosexual has been dehumanized often in the name of God."

Barnette denied that homosexuality is "the unpardonable sin," pointing out that the Apostle Paul did not single out homosexuality as any worse than thievery, idolatry, adultery, greediness, drunkenness, and slander. "Why do church members not have the same abhorrence for the greedy person or the slanderer they have for the homosexual?" he asked.

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'Fire Insurance' Evangelism  
Big In America Skinner Says

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A cheap evangelism that provides little more than "fire insurance" to escape Hell permeates America, evangelist Tom Skinner told 600 participants in a national seminar on Christian lifestyle perspectives.

Skinner, president of Tom Skinner Associates, a New York based evangelical group, castigated the church for "abandoning the inner city" and for spending most of its money to make worship more comfortable.

He said that Jesus announced the arrival of the Kingdom of God when he began his ministry. "If the kingdom of God has arrived, the logical question is 'where is it?'" he asked participants in the seminar sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

It's not on earth, he said, because "on earth, Jesus is not Lord. The world is in the hands of the Evil One."

But we have been duped by a certain kind of Americanism, Skinner said, which says, "'Hey, Jesus may not be Lord on earth but at least he's Lord in America.'" That assumption is obviously false, he continued, because of the oppression, injustice, poverty, hunger and racism that exist in America.

The fact that Christians live in Satan's world "must be understood if God's people are to develop a lifestyle that makes a clear and effective witness in the world," he said, urging Christians to "commit sabotage on Satan's world."

The church, he warned, consistently dwells in the "safe" places, content to enlist the middle class, rejoicing when it saves celebrities but neglecting the "scum"--the pimps, prostitutes, drug addicts and the hurting people of the inner cities.

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Skinner, addressing a primarily Southern Baptist audience including many pastors, said church leaders emphasize the importance of the "place," spending too much money on stained glass windows, pipe organs and pews. Instead, he said, a simpler lifestyle should be adopted that would free money to flow to the greatest human need.

"The reason for establishing a church in a community is to say there's a family of believers whose presence in that community is a continual life of saying repent, the new order has arrived," Skinner said. "It's to say there now dwells in this neighborhood a group of people whose citizenship is in Heaven, whose value system comes from the lordship of Jesus and who have come to live out a new lifestyle."

Without that, he said, evangelism will be only bumper stickers and buttons and consist of button holers trying to get people saved and into the "sick" institutions that so many shallow churches have become. That approach, he said, will result in only unhealthy converts.

Such a lifestyle requires a rethinking of priorities which may include selling a \$75,000 house to live in a \$40,000 house so that the difference could "become effective for the Kingdom of God." Or it could include moving back into the inner city where people hurt, the black evangelist said.

Too many people who say they're "born again" have not changed their life style to indicate a real rebirth, Skinner said. Business practices can't change and people still flee to the suburbs when "undesirables" move in, and exclude people from their church because of skin color.

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Injured Missionary  
Remains Serious

Baptist Press  
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NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Ruth (Mrs. Jack G.) Partain, Southern Baptist missionary to Tanzania, remains in serious condition after being transferred to Nairobi (Kenya) Hospital March 28.

The Partains and another missionary, Marilyn (Mrs. Tom W.) McMillan, were involved in a car-truck collision in Kibaha, Tanzania, March 23 in an early morning rainstorm. Mrs. Partain and Mrs. McMillan were both admitted to the Muhimbili Hospital in Dar Es Salaam. Still semiconscious and suffering from a brain contusion and a broken nose and right arm, Mrs. Partain was moved to Nairobi Hospital for continued medical care.

Mrs. McMillan went home to Arusha, Tanzania from Kilimanjara Hospital in Moshi, Tanzania. She was transferred there March 24. Suffering from a fragmented hip socket and fractured left arm, she is to be in traction for six to eight weeks. Partain, who was driving, suffered only minor injuries and was not hospitalized.

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Hollis, Sauter  
Disagree About TV

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A Los Angeles television station manager strongly disagreed with a Southern Baptist advocate of television reform who charged that television is a "moral wasteland" which has a strong negative impact on shaping moral values of American people.

Van Gordon Sauter, vice president and general manager of KNXT television station in Los Angeles and former vice president of program practices for CBS television network, debated the point with Harry N. Hollis, director of special moral concerns for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, based in Nashville.

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Hollis argued that television programming profoundly shapes contemporary lifestyles, sometimes for good, but far more frequently, "what television is doing to us is essentially negative."

Sauter strongly disagreed, saying that television does not dictate any change in society. Rather, he said, television "responds to change within the society and mirrors the values of society."

He said it is wrong, and even dangerous, for advocates of television reform to urge television programming to reinforce, or to set, community values.

"Television is there to entertain," Sauter said, "no more, no less. It is not there to determine or advance value systems. I don't believe television has a profound impact on changing society. It is society that changes television."

Hollis countered that television systematically stereotypes and dehumanizes people, exploits and abuses women, blunts moral sensitivity, contributes to drug culture by picturing the use of drugs as an acceptable way of life, is the nation's number one sex miseducator, contributes to family instability, helps precipitate violent acts and blunts sensitivity to the harm violence does to human beings.

"I believe the negative impact of television programming on contemporary lifestyles is as great as any social crisis that we face," Hollis said.

Sauter said, however, that television programming simply reflects the audience it serves, neither leading nor abusing its audience. Television responds to the nation's need for diversity, he said.

The problem, Sauter added, comes when viewers make the mistake of assuming that anything on television, at any given moment on any channel, would be perfectly appropriate for anyone.

"That's not and should not be the case," he said. "We must individually seek out the television appropriate to us. The viewer has an obligation to be selective, to take the time to determine what is on television that corresponds to our viewing interests and personal tastes."

Hollis argued that television programming really does not give the viewer what he or she wants. "We want joy, we get hostile humor," Hollis said. "We want intimacy, we get 'sexploitation.' We want adventure, we get violence. We want information, we get sensationalism. We want to relax and we are assaulted with slapstick morality. We want to see how people live and we are deceived by stereotypes."

Hollis agreed with Sauter that it is not just a program problem, it is an audience problem, a problem growing out of human nature. Hollis charged, however, that television has an obligation to act in the public interest in its programming.

"The way television exploits and abuses women is a national scandal," Hollis declared. "Women are routinely treated as simpering idiots who suffer from ring-around-the-collar paranoia and who slip around the grocery store trying to squeeze the toilet tissue. Unless a change takes place," he said, "the children sitting in front of television sets today will be the chauvinists of tomorrow."

Television also encourages a grasping materialism in society, Hollis said, because its purpose is not to entertain nor to inform, but to "deliever audiences so that products can be sold by the commercials. "The programs are simply the bait," he explained.

Television is the number one sex miseducator in America, Hollis said, asserting that the medium "frequently fails to show the consequences of sexual freedom divorced from sexual responsibility." He said TV "contributes to family instability by picturing so many morally warped family models."