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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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## Gore Illustrates Problem Of Pornographic Rock Music

By Lonnie Wilkey

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Quoting lyrics and showing slides that could be best described as "X-rated," the wife of a United States Senator left little doubt with participants at a national Christian ethics seminar that a serious problem exists in today's popular music.

Mary Elizabeth (Tipper) Gore, wife of Tennessee Senator Albert Gore Jr., addressed the controversial issue of pornographic rock music during a seminar on "Recovering Moral Values." The three-day meeting was sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Gore, co-founder of Parents' Music Resource Center in Washington, said violence which is present in daily life and is glorified by the mass media, presents not only an important challenge, but several dilemmas.

She pointed out today's youth grow up under the threat of a nuclear nightmare and with the reality of international terrorism. These realities, she said, have a common denominator: violence.

Not only do we face the realities of violence in today's world, Gore noted, but media outlets are subjecting us to graphic and explicit violence at an alarming rate.

"The marvels of new developments in communications technology are a two-edged sword," she said. "While we may be able to see an Australian soccer game on one of the 190 channels on satellite, we also have unscrambled hard core pornography on another channel.

"This is a brand new challenge for parents who wish to protect their children from such images."

Gore expressed particular concern about how sex, drugs, alcohol and suicide are portrayed in the media, especially through music. She said we must be concerned about songs "detailing explicit sex, violence, sado-masochism, incest, thrill-killing, rape and pro-suicide lyrics and images."

She said those types of songs are definitely a "frightening trend fueled by a minority of powerful artists." According to Gore, there is also a genre of rock which should cause special alarm: "heavy metal" rock, a form of music filled with hatred and despair.

Gore said parents should keep in mind several considerations: rock music is targeted for pre-teenagers as well as teens; parents do not expect the kinds of messages which appear in some music, so they are not aware of it and music is "more pervasive than other forms of media because of cassette recorders, the advent of the Walkman, MTV, Friday night videos on major networks and, of course, radio."

Gore said the average teenager listens to rock music between three and six hours daily. That averages out to around 11,000 hours of music between 7th and 12th grades, she figured. "When you realize that a child only receives 11,000 hours of classroom instruction by the time he's graduated from high school, you can see the concentrated influence of music in a very short time."

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The most important thing to remember, according to Gore, is the younger the listener, the greater the potential for problems. "The younger the listener," she said, "the more unsettled he or she is in terms of identity and values. And larger and larger numbers of elementary school children, in the early stages of developing their values and morality, are becoming consumers of rock music."

Steps are being taken to deal with the problem, Gore related. She said last November, after months of dialogue with the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Parent-Teacher Association, an agreement was reached on the identification of recordings with explicit lyric content.

Gore said the process began in January when releases which have "explicit sex, explicit violence or explicit substance abuse" began to carry the inscription "Explicit Lyrics—Parental Advisory."

She noted, however, the record companies and the artists will make the decisions about the labels. "While this is not perfect, we believe this voluntary program, if followed faithfully, will go far to help parents in evaluating what is appropriate for their children."

Gore pointed out record companies covered by the agreement produce 80 percent of the music products sold. The problems, she said, lie with the small, independent companies which produce heavy metal music and are not covered by the agreement.

She said critics of the agreement accuse the program of censorship, but she disagrees. "While artists have a right to free expression, parents have a right to protect their children from what Smokey Robinson calls 'auditory pornography,'" she said. During her presentation, Gore showed numerous slides which graphically illustrated the explicit sexual and violent themes in some music heard by today's youth.

"We are protecting excesses that have developed in the music industry not because we are against kids or their music," Gore emphasized. "The issue here is much larger than violent and sexually explicit lyrics. It is one of ideas and ideals; of freedom and responsibility in our society."

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Middle East Baptist Work  
Facing Personnel Shortages

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
3/19/86

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The future effectiveness of Baptist hospitals in Jordan and Yemen is in jeopardy, says Isam Ballenger, who directs Southern Baptist work in the Middle East.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has not appointed a missionary doctor to the Middle East in more than five years, he explains.

Pressing personnel needs also loom ahead for two other key avenues of witness in the Middle East--the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary and Arab Baptist Publication Center, both based in Beirut, Lebanon.

The retirement of nine veteran missionaries during the next several years is prompting the mounting concern and Ballenger has been emphasizing the personnel needs in various speaking engagements, hoping someone will respond. "I find people who are interested, but for some reason, none has come forward as yet," he says.

In a few years these missionaries will be leaving the field and there will be no one to replace them, he says, adding, "I really don't know what we're going to do. The missionaries on the field are sensing it. I see it now in so many letters: What's being done? Is there no one on the horizon?"

In Jordan, L. August Lovegren, a surgeon at the Baptist Hospital at Ajloun, and Lois Calhoun, director of nursing, will be retiring next year. Only one missionary surgeon, John Roper, and his wife, Ruth, a physician who supervises the hospital's laboratory, will be left in Jordan. But they also will retire within a few years.

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In Yemen, James Young, who founded the Jibla Baptist Hospital in 1968, will be retiring. Three other Southern Baptist physicians, Jean Dickman, Ron Pirtle and Martha Myers, are assigned there. But one or two more doctors are needed to complete the staff.

The missionaries in Jordan, with the help of Jordanian co-workers, cared for 2,160 in-patients and 11,241 out-patients in the 30-bed hospital during 1985. At the 75-bed hospital in Yemen, the Southern Baptist doctors and several doctors from other countries handled 3,314 in-patients and 37,327 out-patients.

In Beirut, three of four missionaries on the faculty of Arab Baptist Theological Seminary--Ed Nicholas, David King and Bill Trimble--are nearing retirement. Only Emmett Barnes and several part-time Lebanese teachers will remain. And Frances Fuller will be leaving her position as director of Arab publications sometime after 1990. Seven new missionaries have been assigned to Lebanon, but to fill other critical needs.

Lebanese Baptists, battered by the nation's 11-year civil war, "are just not equipped to handle it all," Ballenger says of the Beirut-based ministries to the Arab world.

The war has cut seminary enrollment to fewer than a dozen students. Nevertheless, Ballenger says, "The preparation of young Arabs for church work in that part of the world is vital." A Baptist education provides "a strong theology of the local church," in addition to training in evangelism, he adds.

Priority needs at the seminary are for an instructor in New Testament and theology, one in religious education who might also work in developing specialized materials for Arab churches and one to be involved in theological education by extension in other Middle East countries.

The future need for a publications director is critical, Ballenger notes, because Baptists are "the major supplier of Arab Christian literature in the Middle East." A translation of MasterLife into Arabic was completed recently and now a Sunday school curriculum for all ages is under way.

Last year, the publication center turned out 123,000 books under 12 different titles.

Ballenger realizes people will ask, "Why talk about sending missionaries to Lebanon when Lebanon is in such a chaotic state?" He notes that about 15 Southern Baptist missionaries continue working there and the strife has not necessitated relocating the Arab ministries.

"Although they live in areas of strife, these missionaries by and large carry on a normal life. They go about their work. And when strife comes, they know what to do."

The key consideration for persons open to work with Arabs, Ballenger says, is "a calling to the Middle East for theological education or publications work. The location at present is Lebanon. I hope it will continue to be. But if the time comes when it's completely foolish to send people into a place, then we'll have that ministry somewhere else."

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World Seeks 'Word From God'  
In Moral Issues: Honeycutt

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press  
3/19/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In a world seeking "authentic and not autocratic" moral leadership, Southern Baptists have been "tongue tied" and surrendered leadership to the Radical Right, a seminary president told a national ethics seminar.

Roy L. Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., told 350 participants at a Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission seminar an inadequate theological understanding of the Word of God has caused "moral heresy."

"We do confront a moral heresy," Honeycutt said. "We hear much today about orthodoxy and heresy; about theological conformity and biblical uniformity, yet those volcanic tirades which periodically erupt across our convention often obliterate the problem of moral heresy."

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He described the "heresy" as "radical in that it turns the whole of the revelation of God 180 degrees," and said it is "washing at the foundations of all aspects of life, even the most theologically orthodox."

Moral heresy, like theological heresy, he said, "can be overcome only by a clear, unequivocal commitment to the fullness of God's revelation. It is God's Word—living, dynamic and powerful—that stems the erosion of moral heresy."

Honeycutt told of "theological heresies of the First Century where Christians compromised their faith." He listed dilution (turning Christianity into a cultic religion); truncation (severing Christianity from its Jewish roots); distortion (emphasizing the coming of the Holy Spirit in such a way it "twisted the core out of shape"); archaism (locking Christianity into primitive expressions), and evacuation (emptying Christianity of its essential belief in one God by making Jesus a lesser divine being.)

He said the "same forces are operative in both moral and theological heresy," and said Christians become guilty of moral heresy by:

Dilution, "when we turn Christian moral commitment into a cultural ethic with shallow, if any, roots in Christian faith"; truncation, when we "so collapse and shorten and abbreviate our ethical concerns that our ethics do not have the full range embodied in the biblical revelation." ("There is a temptation to take a noble, good cause and so commit your life to it that in the process you have truncated everything else.");

Distortion, "when we create out of ourselves mini-Gods and believe, as some of the leadership of this convention apparently does, that every thought is inspired of God"; archaism, when "we have a radical emphasis on an individual possessed by the Holy Spirit that we distort our faith", and evacuation when "we empty our moral commitment of an authentic Christian discipleship and the dynamic of a faith commitment that transforms our lives from the very core of our being to the outward reach of every activity in life."

He noted: "The year 1979 was a bonus year for the Radical Right, for it was in 1979 that the Moral Majority was officially organized by Jerry Falwell. You may also recall the strange coincidence—if it were coincidence—that 1979 was the first year of a seven-year dominance of the SBC by the most radically right group of presidents in the history of this denomination.

"We can only hope that the seven-year pattern of feast and famine in the book of Genesis holds true in the Twentieth Century."

Commenting he was not "arguing the case for Jerry Falwell," Honeycutt said: "If we have learned nothing else in the emergence of Moral Majority and all radical movements associated thereto, it is that there is a hunger for moral values on the part of many people. We should be clear and we should be concise and we should be committed to providing a quality of moral leadership that stands forever against the Radical Right."

But, Honeycutt continued: "We have stood tongue tied for the seven years and we have said very little.... We are simply not articulating moral values about some critical issues and into this vacuum of leadership has swirled all manner of people."

Honeycutt said the world is asking "if there is a Word from God. We live in the midst of a world seeking a Word...but if there is a world in search of a Word, there also is a Word in search of a world. That ought to be the heartbeat of our message, that the 'Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, Jesus Christ."

The seminary president said God's Word (Jesus Christ) is a "redeeming word, a reforming word, a servant word, a creative word, and a living word."

"God did not create us and set us in motion and then leave us. His creative Word is present; it was present at the beginning and will be present at the consummation and at all points in between. In our ethical and moral decision making, in all of the other decisions we confront...the Word is there, creative, dynamic, moving, living," he said.

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But, Honeycutt warned: "One of the problems today is that many people are afraid of a Word like that. They want a Word that has stabilized, so they can print it with so many pounds of pressure with ink on paper. (With that kind of Word) you can control it, you can hold it in your hand, you can number its commandments and memorize its verses.

"All of that is good, but the Word of God is far more dynamic than that. But to use the analogy of Jesus, there are many who are afraid of the living, active, dynamic Word of God. They are always blowing up old wineskins down in the basement...."

Honeycutt said First Century Israel tried the way of legalism, and had more than 600 commandments. "Legalism doesn't count noses, it measures noses," he said, "That is the inevitable fate of legalized religion.

"But into that kind of world our Lord came. He gave himself as a living Word, not only that he was alive in his time, but that as a resurrected Lord he is alive today. You and I have the assurance of him, so that in our moral and ethical decision making we are not left alone, because we have a Word beyond our words alone; a creative word, a redeeming word, a reforming word, a servant word and a Living Word."

Honeycutt said the Bible is a witness "to God and what he has done and will do," and added: "I do not intend to minimize the Scriptures, but it is possible to overstate your case even for the Bible. While affirming the authority of the Bible and its indispensable role, we must remember that the gospel was preached, persons were won to Christ and First Century churches were started before we ever had a New Testament.

"Let us remember that the gospel--crystallized into the New Testament affirmation that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, that he was buried and rose the third day--predates the Bible and is the gospel, life's liberating power and the foundation for all of our moral imperatives."

Honeycutt said he has "no qualifications whatsoever for affirming the authority of the Bible. I have no reservation about affirming--as my colleagues at Southern seminary have done since 1859--the infallibility of the Bible, when rightly interpreted.

"Of course," he added, "it obviously is not infallible when some idiot takes a superficial view of it. But it is infallible when rightly interpreted."

The Bible, he added, "is a witness of what God has done and is a product of the gospel, not the source of the gospel. The Bible always points to the authority of the living God."

He asked: "What do you do when you run out onto the edge of all of the commandments and there are none left? What then? What do you do when you get to the edge of all that is specific and clear in the New Testament, or when you confront particular social issues which are not mentioned by name in the Bible? What do you do?"

"When you get to the edge and the commandments run out, what you do is magnify your relationship to God in Jesus Christ; you magnify your relationship in love with those people around you; you magnify your relationship with a Living God."



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