



# BAPTIST PRESS

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March 31, 1989

89-51

Sanctity of life focus  
of CLC annual seminar

By Dan Martin & Louis Moore

N-10

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--More than a dozen speakers explored sanctity-of-life issues ranging from abortion to human sexuality during the annual seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission March 27-29 in Kansas City, Mo.

"We were trying to address the questions of life in its sanctity and sacredness," said Richard D. Land, the commission's executive director.

"We wanted to help people understand this is a comprehensive subject. People have complained that sanctity of life is more than an abortion issue. We have tried to address that. We talked about abortion but also about many other issues such as hunger, euthanasia, pornography, genetic engineering, teenage suicide, sexuality, and alcohol and drug abuse."

During the conference, which drew 209 registered participants, two speakers concentrated on abortion, although others touched on the issue as they spoke on other topics.

Gary Bauer, a former White House staff member and now vice president of Focus on the Family, who spoke on child pornography, announced a letter-writing campaign to the U.S. Supreme Court on a pending abortion case.

Writing letters to the court is not common, he said, but added, "Justices are affected by public opinion." He said four justices favor current abortion rulings, while four are opposed. "I encourage you to write to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor whose vote is in doubt," he said.

In a keynote address, author Calvin Miller, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Omaha, Neb., told participants, "With every little life we scrape from the womb, we die a little more." The United States, with 1.8 children per family, "is an aging, dying nation," he said.

"By 2025, a scant 35 years from now, the U.S. will have twice as many grandparents as babies. Our burials will soar as our births decline," he said, noting the "command of God to be fruitful and multiply. The whole point of this paper is that being fruitful and multiplying go together ... (and) we sin by being unfruitful and vanishing from the face of the earth."

Kenneth Kantzer, former editor of Christianity Today, now emeritus dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., traced a position that would allow abortion when the life of the mother is threatened, in cases of rape or incest, or when severe fetal deformity occurs. Such cases, he said, "account for only one-half of 1 percent of all abortions."

Commenting that a "careful appraisal of the American scene makes it evident that no absolutist law or constitutional amendment (banning abortions) has the remotest chance of passing in the near future," Kantzer said: "Some sort of law that would at least eliminate one of the most frightening trends of our day -- abortion on demand -- is well within our reach.

"If evangelicals and their political and social allies who support laws against abortion would prove far-sighted enough and cooperative enough to pass such a law, would be be prepared for the consequences? Tens of thousands of babies, now aborted, would be brought to term. Many would prove viable; would live and some would grow to maturity but would be deformed.

"Are we prepared to share in the care of these handicapped babies? If we cannot answer yes to these questions, we have no right on moral grounds to oppose their abortion" he said.

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On pornography, Thomas Parker, professor of counseling at Dallas Theological Seminary, told participants enough anti-pornography laws already exist -- if enforced -- to begin making a dent in the pornography industry. He urged the CLC to publish materials on helping citizens pursue passage of other anti-pornography laws.

Bauer encouraged steps "to inoculate our children from the insidious appeal of pornographic materials," and suggested parents become more involved with children. "Research tells us the average American father spends two minutes a day educating his children," he said. "What are we saying to our children when we allow them to spend more time watching television by the time they are six than they will spend talking to their fathers the rest of their lives?"

He also urged more attentiveness to what is being taught to children and said the schools "must join us in an effort to teach our children reliable standards of right and wrong."

Death -- suicide and euthanasia -- were addressed by two other speakers.

Dallas psychiatrist Paul Warren said children and adolescents are "in a state of crisis" because of rampant drug abuse, spreading teenage suicide, parental divorce and other psychological problems. He urged Southern Baptists to work to lead parents to a deeper commitment to parenting and to strive to give children a biblically based sense of self-esteem.

Thomas E. Elkins, professor of medical ethics at the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor, said now is the time for Christians to develop a thoughtful, carefully constructed, biblical approach to the thorny and difficult issues involving euthanasia and to offer to society a model for how to approach the issue.

Christians should approach the subject cautiously, he said, noting it is better to err on the side of caution than to side with too-liberal rules on euthanasia.

Graham Kerr, the Galloping Gourmet on television in the 1960s and 1970s, now heads Creative Lifestyles, International in Tacoma, Wash., "a resource center that helps people live better with less and share part of their savings with those in desperate need."

During the 30 minutes he spoke, Kerr said, 40 people will die in the United States from diet-related diseases, and "828 kids will die worldwide from diet-related diseases. That is a 21-to-1 ratio; one of us dies from eating too much and 21 die from eating too little.

Kerr urged participants to make a commitment to do something about the issue, to have compassion and to be consistent. "President George Bush called for 1,000 points of light," Kerr said, but "God our Father has called for us to be 1 billion points of light."

Mark Coppenger, executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, told participants genetic engineering is both boon and bane, "but the same holds true for VCRs, fire and procreation." He noted Christians "will not and should not derail research and development. ... As with every human endeavor this science will involve wasteful and pernicious practices, but there is nothing in principle which should scuttle the enterprise.

"While receiving the technology, we must steel ourselves against its abuse and prepare ourselves to take advantage of its promise" he said.

Richard Foster, professor of theology at Friends University in Wichita, Kan., said: "One of the real tragedies in Christian history has been the divorce of sexuality from spirituality. That fact is all the more lamentable since the Bible holds such a high celebrative view of human sexuality.

"Our human sexuality is not just an accidental arrangement of the human species, not just a convenient way to keep the human race going. No, it is at the center of our true humanity. We exist as male and female in relationship. Our sexualness, our capacity to love and be loved, is intimately tied to our creation in the image of God."

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Pollster George Gallup Jr. of Princeton, N.J., recounted results from polls of religious views and said a "large majority of Americans believe in a personal God, believe that Jesus Christ is God or the Son of God, believe their prayers are answered and say that religion is either very or fairly important in their lives."

He added: "Surveys show that while eight in 10 Americans regard themselves as Christians, only four in 10 know who, according to the Bible, delivered the Sermon on the Mount; fewer than half of the public are able to name the four Gospels. Many say the Ten Commandments are valid rules for living, but they're not too sure what these rules are."

"And if vast numbers of Christians do not know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount, it is highly unlikely that they have any grasp of central Christian doctrines such as the Incarnation, the atonement and grace, perhaps the most crucial concept in Christian theology because it refers to the free and unmerited act through which God restores an estranged humanity."

Charles Lowery, director of counseling services at First Baptist Church of Dallas and professor of counseling at Criswell College in Dallas, told participants that just saying no to drugs and alcohol is not sufficient. "We have to make an end run. We have to replace them with something else" he said.

"Don't forget what the church has to combat drugs and alcohol. That is the power source, the power of Jesus Christ" he said.

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(Also contributing to this story was Bob S. Terry, editor of the Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention.)

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Lewis, Lackey honored  
for distinguished service

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Baptist Press  
3/31/89

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--A pastor and an agency executive were honored with Distinguished Service Awards presented during the 1989 annual seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, March 27-29 in Kansas City, Mo.

The commission honored former Chairman Fred Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church of Athens, Ala., and Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta and a former pastor and president of Hannibal LaGrange Baptist College in Hannibal, Mo.

Lackey was honored for his work in race relations. In his acceptance, Lackey alluded to turmoil in the agency during his tenure as chairman, which included the election, service and resignation of former executive director N. Larry Baker.

The Alabama pastor told participants, "It was not always a joy serving on the CLC, but it was always a challenge."

Lewis was honored for his contributions to moral and social issues, including abortion and race, while a pastor, college president and agency executive.

He said he is "proud to be an American, but I am not always proud of America." He noted problems of abortion, pornography, drugs and alcohol, and racism. "I am proud of the CLC and commend them for coming to the forefront to address these problems."

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More blacks, ethnics, women  
needed as chaplains, HMB says

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
3/31/89

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's chaplaincy division hopes to recruit more blacks, ethnics and women as chaplains to meet increasing requests from organizations that employ chaplains.

"The door to chaplaincy ministry remains wide open for blacks, ethnics and women," said Huey Perry, chaplaincy division director.

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The division begun a concerted effort to enlist more qualified Southern Baptists from minority groups as chaplains, Perry said, adding, "We have set out in a designed, deliberate way to do something about meeting this need."

Southern Baptists do not appoint and employ chaplains in the same way as missionaries. Rather, the HMB chaplaincy division works through the Southern Baptist Chaplains Commission to endorse chaplains for employment by the military, hospitals, correctional institutions, businesses and industry.

Currently, 93 percent of the 2,014 endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains are white males, Perry said. The total includes 106 women, 20 blacks, 18 Hispanics and 19 ethnics.

The numbers do not reflect the diversity of the Southern Baptist Convention nor the American population, Perry noted.

"I'm embarrassed when someone asks me how many black chaplains we have," he said. "Our number of black chaplains does not reflect the number of black churches we have. And the same is true for other ethnic groups."

Of Southern Baptists' 37,567 churches, about 3 percent are predominantly black, 6 percent are predominantly Hispanic and 2 percent are predominantly Asian. Southern Baptists worship in 88 languages every week.

Organizations that employ chaplains, especially the military, are issuing pleas for more black, ethnic and women chaplains, Perry said: "I recently received a request from the Navy to send them more women and minorities. They desire to increase their number of women chaplains four-fold.

"Southern Baptists must respond to meet the ministry needs of those who are in the armed services. I think Southern Baptists, with such strong diversity, have no choice but to respond to this challenge."

Navy Chaplain Cmdr. George Langhorn said the Navy hopes to enlist 12 women and 10 blacks for active duty this year, almost half of their allotment of 50 new positions. The Navy has 1,166 active chaplains.

In the Army, the situation is similar, according to Chaplain Lt. Col. John Kaising. The Army's goal is to increase its corps of 1,591 chaplains from 9.7 percent to 11.5 percent black, from 1.3 percent to 2.2 percent Hispanic and from 1.45 percent to 2.2 percent female, he said.

"We try and maintain our chaplains corps as reflective of the population we serve as we can. But we can only bring into the service the chaplains that are provided by the churches," Kaising said.

Chaplain Maj. John Whitley said the Air Force also is interested in recruiting minorities as chaplains. However, the Air Force system is designed to place chaplains primarily on the basis of faith group needs without regard for gender or race, he said.

Beyond the military, opportunities for blacks, ethnics and women exist in hospital, correctional, business and industrial chaplaincy, said Bill Donovan and Paul Stephenson of the HMB chaplaincy division.

"There's really a great need for minorities as hospital chaplains," said Stephenson, director of hospital chaplaincy. "We're doing everything we can to promote this wherever we go."

Donovan, director of correctional, business and industrial chaplaincy, said the need for minority chaplains in non-military settings may be greater than the need in the military. "Wherever there are people at work, there are minority groups," he said. "So there is a need for people to minister to them."

Perry cited several reasons he thinks so few blacks, ethnics and women serve as Southern Baptist chaplains.

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First is a misunderstanding that women cannot be endorsed as chaplains. That simply is not true," he said. "We are of the strong conviction that chaplaincy is a place for all people to fulfill their call to ministry."

Another barrier is the perception that chaplaincy is not a valid place of ministry, Perry added. "We have pretty well overcome that problem with white males, but now we're working to educate other groups that chaplains serve a vital role in Christian ministry," he said.

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Nashville churches file  
counterclaim to Metro lawsuit

By Lonnie Wilkey

N-60  
(Tenn.) Baptist Press  
3/31/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Seventeen Nashville Baptist Association churches are among congregations that have filed a counterclaim to a lawsuit from the city's metropolitan government.

In late December 1988, Metro government sought to tax 141 tax-exempt properties, including parsonages owned by the Nashville Baptist churches, which the city claimed were not used for religious or charitable purposes.

The response to the lawsuit, filed by Nashville attorney Robert C. Taylor on behalf of the churches, noted "The real properties subject to plaintiff's action are parsonages used for religious and other exempt purposes under the authorization" the state constitution.

The response also said the church parsonages were exempt from taxation prior to 1986, "and their status and use as parsonages have not changed since the plaintiff, through its assessor of property, unilaterally denied exemptions to defendants' parsonages."

The churches' counterclaim asked that the tax assessor "be enjoined from making assessments of the defendants' parsonages so long as only one exemption per church congregation has been claimed; that all assessments of the defendant church parsonages together with any property taxes, penalties, and/or interest due thereon for the years 1986, 1987 and 1988 be declared null and void; and that any property taxes, penalties and/or interest paid by any of the defendant churches for their respective parsonages be refunded."

Taylor also asked Metro government to "delete from its tax rolls and records the defendant church parsonages subject to this civil action."

A date for the hearing in chancery court has not yet been established. Bob Old, pastor of First Baptist Church of Joelton, who is coordinating the effort among Nashville Baptist churches, said about 35 churches have raised \$7,000 thus far for legal defense.

Old predicted the case could go to the Tennessee Supreme Court and possibly even further. He estimated legal fees could reach \$100,000.

Another effort is underway to raise funds for legal defense, he said.

"We have to awaken our brethren that we are struggling for the privileges and rights of all churches," Old said, noting if a ruling were rendered in favor of taxation of church parsonages, it eventually would affect churches all across the state.

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Church doubles attendance,  
starts 3 missions at Easter

By Mark Wingfield

N-80 HMB

Baptist Press  
3/31/89

MISSION VIEJO, Calif. (BP)--Saddleback Valley Community Church doubled its attendance Easter weekend by asking members not to come to Sunday services.

The church also started three new congregations at the same time.

Pastor Rick Warren mailed letters to all church members asking them to attend a special Saturday night worship service Easter weekend. This would make room for non-Christians and Easter-only Christians to attend the two Sunday services, he said.

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The nine-year church in Mission Viejo, Calif., has become known for Warren's innovative church-growth techniques. He started the church with seven people and has grown it to an average attendance of 3,800. Easter weekend attendance totaled 7,490.

Saddleback Valley was the first church in the Southern Baptist Convention known to offer a regular Saturday night service, which started about one year ago. However, the church had not promoted the Saturday night service because it was held in a different location than Sunday services.

The church has no permanent building but rents Trabucko Hills High School every Sunday. Beginning Easter weekend, it was able to use that facility on Saturdays as well.

Warren said he wasn't sure how many people would show up Saturday night for Easter services, especially in a heavy rainstorm. But the people poured in as fast as the rain.

A total of 3,020 people attended the Saturday night service, parking a half-mile away in every direction. Hundreds sat in an overflow room with television monitors, 600 stood through the entire service, and the fire marshall turned away another 1,000, Warren said.

And then another 4,470 people came to the two traditional Sunday services, he said.

Warren attributed the large increase in attendance to adding the third service: "We figure every time you add another service, you're dropping another hook in the water. It builds momentum."

He said Saddleback could have added an early morning service on Sunday, but that would have appealed only to Christians, he said.

"Most churches say, 'We'd like you to come to know the Lord, but you have to do it on Sunday morning,'" he said. "That way you only have one hook. We had three hooks."

While many pastors dread the once-a-year crowd at Easter, Warren said he values the opportunity to address non-Christians: "They're the very people we want. If they only come once a year, I sure want them in my church."

To attract these people, Saddleback mailed 85,000 fliers advertising the Easter services.

The key to bringing the Easter-only crowd back is to start a new, practical sermon series on Easter Sunday, Warren said.

Although not everyone who came for Easter services will return to Saddleback, a certain percentage will, he said, explaining this as the "residue factor" -- that every time a church increases attendance for a special event, subsequent attendance will fall back but will still be greater than before the event.

Easter also is the best day of the year to start a new congregation, Warren said. He started Saddleback on Easter Sunday in 1980 and has used the same principles to start mission congregations in subsequent years.

The three new congregations Saddleback started this Easter are Searidge Community Church in Laguna Hills, Calif., with an attendance of 282; Olive Branch Community Church in Norco, Calif., with 160 attending the first service; and Scottsdale Community Church in Scottsdale, Ariz., with 76 people braving a flash flood to attend.

With these three missions, Saddleback has started 13 new congregations during its nine-year history.