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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Anti-abortion vaccines loom  
as challenge to pro-life cause

By Joe Maxwell

Baptist Press  
2/9/95

WHEATON, Ill. (BP)--As the controversy heats to a boiling point over the trial entrance of RU-486, the abortion pill, into the United States, another potentially mor destructive abortion technology is slowly simmering on the back burner.

Christian bioethicist Lawrence Roberge said in a paper recently presented at a Christian bioethics conference at Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Illinois that this new abortion recipe is almost done -- and it could replace RU-486 or any other abortion procedure as the deadly main course served to American women seeking abortion.

"This process of abortion would avoid the public scrutiny," notes C. Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "If this became a widely used drug, it clearly would change the strategy of the pro-life movement."

Roberge calls the new abortion technologies "vaccines," not because they prevent pregnancy, but because they are designed to attack an early pregnancy and wipe it out in or around the first week of pregnancy, when the baby is barely the size of the dot over this i.

Vaccines would be 100 percent effective, with few immediate side effects, and could last over several years, acting on a monthly basis. It is possible a woman could abort 12 children a year in early embryonic stages without even knowing she was pregnant.

The repercussions for pro-life advocates and activists could be radical, says Roberge, a biotechnology consultant and researcher with a masters of biomedical science from the University of Massachusetts medical school. "Whereas pro-life forces have had to deal with hundreds of abortion clinics and hospitals across the United States, abortion vaccines will be distributed in the offices of tens of thousands of OB/GYN doctors," Roberge predicts. "If pro-life organizations do not speak out against this technology before it arises commercially, (they) may have less influence as a moral guide afterwards."

Although such vaccines would remove from the public's eye much of the uglier concepts connected with aborting older unborn babies, the CLC's Mitchell says he believes the rhetoric of the abortion issue must remain the same. "Murder by any other name is still murder," he says. But the process of picketing clinics might lose effectiveness.

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"It might cause our strategy to become more neighborly," says Mitchell. The focus might shift more from clinic sidewalks to "ministry to or relations with our neighbors who might be the subject of or wanting an abortion."

Michele Arocha Allen, communications director for the National Right to Life Committee in Washington, says her organization has been so busy fighting RU-486 and other current life causes they are not yet conversant about the developing vaccine technology.

Yet, over the past 20 years several international agencies funded by the World Health Organization have crept closer and closer to developing and marketing vaccines.

"It is important to note that the RU-486 market studies predict that the drug will replace 30 to 60 percent of clinical legal abortions," says Roberge.

"Abortion vaccines could replace 90 percent or more of the clinical abortions, while at the same time being touted as a safe, effective, long-term form of birth control."

Two forms of vaccines are being tested. The first would remove a particular hormone, human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG) normally present in a woman's blood, and thus disable an embryo from attaching to the uterine wall. The embryo would pass from the woman, who likely would never even know she's conceived. Two scientists are leading research on this vaccine, one in India and the other at Ohio State University. This vaccine could be available in a few years and have a five-year life span between booster shots.

The second vaccine is in an early form of experimentation, says Roberge. It would isolate a certain protein in the embryo and "'teach' the woman's immune system that the early embryo is foreign and must be destroyed," he said. The vaccine could last up to two years.

Mitchell says he sees some possible hazards that could emerge from using such vaccines. For instance, will these vaccines be nonreversible? "Norplant can be taken out. You can stop taking the pill. But once you have this vaccine, presumably there is no changing your mind," at least for a set period of time.

Mitchell says he also is concerned about government mandating compulsory use of vaccines for certain high-risk groups. And the potential for birth defects would also be a concern.

But one of the most worrisome implications, says Mitchell, is the reduction of what some have called the "yuk" factor, meaning the horrid images long associated with certain types of abortions that saline-burn the baby or slice it to pieces. With a vaccine, the process of killing could become all too neat and tidy.

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Maxwell is a national correspondent for World magazine who lives in Lorman, Miss.

Legislatures to receive  
parents' rights initiative

By Darrell Turner

Baptist Press  
2/9/95

ARLINGTON, Va. (BP)--A movement to protect parents' rights to raise their children from government encroachment is working to achieve its aims by amending state constitutions.

The proposed Parental Rights Amendment simply states: "The right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children shall not be infringed. The legislature shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

An organization in Arlington, Va., called "Of the People" is promoting the amendment and has won sponsors in 21 state legislatures. It has also garnered interest from such Christian organizations as the American Family Association, Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America and Focus on the Family.

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Of the People has not approached any Southern Baptist agencies with the proposal, but Michael Whitehead of Kansas City, Mo., general counsel for the Christian Life Commission, told Baptist Press "it would certainly be worth our publicizing to our people and communicating to our state conventions about."

Greg Erken, executive director of Of the People, said the amendment is designed to protect the rights of parents in education, health and family integrity in the face of governmental encroachments on such matters as abortion, condom distribution, public school curriculums and homework.

The legal precedents for the principles encompassed in the amendment include two U.S. Supreme Court rulings -- Meyer vs. Nebraska (1923), which overturned a law barring foreign language instruction in public schools, and Pierce vs. Society of Sisters (1925), which struck down an Oregon law requiring parents to send their children to public schools.

The Pierce ruling stated, among other things, that "the child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations."

Some observers wonder whether the amendment might be too all-encompassing. Marcia Lowry, director of the children's rights project for the American Civil Liberties Union in New York, said government should be able to infringe on parental rights to protect children from abuse or ensure that they receive medical care.

However, Whitehead of the CLC called it an "absurd red herring" to imply that the amendment would legalize child abuse. "The fact that we have a First Amendment that guarantees freedom of speech doesn't mean that that right is absolute," he said. "It's still illegal to yell 'fire' in a crowded theater or to libel or slander someone, so every constitutional right has limits."

Erken said his year-old organization has a small budget, which he declined to disclose, and a staff of only four but hopes to get support from existing "pro-family" movements in different states.

"We are not trying to re-invent the wheel in terms of going out and trying to establish 50 state chapters," he said. "If there's an existing pro-family coalition that's up and running, we see no reason to try to replicate."

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Turner is religion writer for the Fort Wayne, Ind., Journal Gazette.

Graham's Global Mission to reach  
Japan quake survivors, Rwandans

Baptist Press  
2/9/95

NEW YORK (BP)--Modern technology will carry Billy Graham's gospel message even to earthquake survivors in Japan and Rwandan refugees in Africa during the evangelist's upcoming Global Mission international crusade via satellite.

According to Bob Williams, director of international ministries for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and director of Global Mission, survivors of the recent earthquake that mauled Kobe, Japan, still will have opportunity to participate in the March 16-18 crusade to be aired from Puerto Rico to 175 countries.

"We had 30 locations planned in Kobe, but the majority of those buildings were destroyed," Williams said. "The city leaders have agreed to help by bulldozing an entire city block to clear an area for an open air meeting by satellite on a large screen."

Graham, in a New York news conference Feb. 7, added, "Some of the greatest meetings we have held in Japan have been in the Osaka-Kobe area. Japanese youth especially are searching and looking for something they can put their teeth into and believe."

Graham noted Kob is just one of many places currently in the news where preparations are being made for Global Mission.

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They also include four evangelistic missions planned inside the refugee camps in Goma, Zaire, where over 1.8 million Rwanda refugees still reside.

"UN and other relief workers tell us they expect many to attend," Graham noted. "We even have several evangelistic meetings planned in Haiti, where pastors feel that now, more than ever before, their people need to hear a message of peace, hope and forgiveness."

Graham's most ambitious crusade in more than 50 years of ministry, Global Mission also has been described as the largest outreach in the history of the Christian church.

Originating from a crusade in Puerto Rico, it is estimated eight million people will attend satellite crusades to be held March 16-18 at 2,200 locations in 175 countries, in more than 100 languages. A total of 1 billion people are expected to participate in video crusades and prime-time broadcasts on national television networks in 100 countries, including a syndicated broadcast in the United States on March 19.

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Students' rights suppressed,  
Land says; AU's Lynn disagrees

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
2/9/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--"Widespread suppression" of religious and free speech rights exists on America's public school campuses, and "we are going to insist that that kind of thing stop," Richard Land said at a recent meeting of Jewish leaders.

In the same forum, Barry Lynn, director of a leading church-state separation organization, said, "There is no war against religion" in the United States.

Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, and Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, proved the main antagonists on a panel Feb. 8 at the annual meeting of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council in Washington. Other panel members discussing religion and public policy in society were Bernice Balter, executive director of the Women's League of Conservative Judaism, and Murray Friedman, director of the American Jewish Committee's Philadelphia chapter.

There are forces "who do not want a pluralistic society but who want a secular society," Land told the panel and an audience of about 250.

The separation of church and state does not mean "separation of religious conviction from public policy issues," he said. "In fact, free expression, we would argue, includes religious expression."

The religious left wants to talk about its issues in religious terms but wants to "tilt the playing field" when religious conservatives talk about their issues, Land said.

Lynn, meanwhile, said there is not a naked public square when it comes to religion but a "fully clothed debate" on social issues.

The greatest problem is not government seeking to purge religion from society but some forces attempting to impose beliefs they cannot persuade others to accept, Lynn said.

Lynn criticized the Christian Coalition for portraying its positions as the only Christian ones. While he disagreed with naming an organization Christian Coalition, Land said, "I will take Barry Lynn seriously" about his objections to Christian Coalition when he holds People for the American Way accountable for portraying its agenda as "the American way."

Much of the 90-minute discussion focused on religion in the public schools.

If student-led prayer and educational vouchers become law, the country has "pretty much eliminated the principle of separation of church and state," Lynn said.

Land said he supports the "right kind of prayer amendment" which protects students' religious expression and does not allow religious exercises led by teachers or determined by student majority vote. There should be an open public forum from which no student viewpoint is excluded, he said.

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"We are opposed to going back to the days before" the 1962 and '63 Supreme Court decisions outlawing state-mandated prayer and Bible reading, Land said. He said he favors "student rights and expression of religion they bring from home, church, mosque, synagogue, temple."

There is "not an open forum in public schools," said Lynn, who formerly was legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union.

"Stealth evangelism" in the schools by teachers and visiting speakers is a "big problem that apparently only one side wants to deal with," he said.

When asked about a constitutional amendment for a moment of silence, Lynn said a moment of silence was not much to offer students at the beginning of the school day. Land said, "We've finally found something on which Barry and I agree."

Land later told a reporter a constitutional amendment to guarantee a moment of silence is a "meaningless and futile exercise. The right to freedom of expression includes the right to be heard."

While Balter seemed to adopt a strict separationist view, Friedman said Jews need to rethink their view of church-state separation because of the breakdown of norms and values based on religion. Jewish and Catholic schools should be strengthened and poor children given a chance for a strong, values-based education by vouchers, he said.

Such an approach is not conservative but "good, old-fashioned liberalism," Friedman said. Jews who go to private schools while supporting the sanctity of public schools practice some hypocrisy, he said.

The NJCRAC is the umbrella organization for 13 national and 117 local Jewish community relations councils in the country.

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**Here's Hope: Plan it  
when it works for you**

**By Sarah Zimmerman**

**Baptist Press  
2/9/95**

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--While other California churches are scheduling praise reports from the "Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now" personal witnessing emphasis, Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church in Riverside is just getting started.

Church leaders decided there wasn't enough time between Christmas and the Jan. 9 national kick-off of "Here's Hope. Share Jesus Now," said Rick Patterson, minister of evangelism. Instead, the church offered witness training in January and encouraged members to share Christ once a day between Feb. 1 and April 1.

Many churches planned their individual witnessing endeavor at times other than Jan. 9 to March 9 because of schedule conflicts, said Darrell Robinson, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board vice president for evangelism.

Churches not participating in the simultaneous witnessing effort can still challenge members to witness at least 60 times in 60 days, Robinson said. Churches planning a witnessing thrust need to pray first, discover prospects, enlist members to participate and train members to witness.

The Riverside church is expecting such positive results from "Here's Hope" that it plans to go to dual Sunday school classes "to make room for all the new people," Patterson said. "Then we can handle another 500 people in Sunday school. We expect God to bring growth."

Dean Kenneth, associate minister at Antioch Baptist Church in Long Beach, Calif., said his church also is expecting great things from "Here's Hope." The church has scheduled a regular praise report during its Sunday morning service.

In December, 110 members of the African American church were trained to use a witnessing tract based on verses in Romans which explain the plan of salvation. The pastor, Joe Chaney Jr., generates excitement about "Here's Hope" by mentioning it every Sunday, Kenneth said.

Church members know they're supposed to witness, Kenneth said, but an emphasis like "Here's Hope" give evangelism a sense of urgency.

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He gets inaugural 'Red Nose'  
just for clowning around

By Orville Scott

BULLARD, Texas (BP)--Ernie Liebig has seen a lot of changes since he pioneered gospel clowning 42 years ago.

Even so: "We must use all available means to reach people for Christ," said Liebig, who recently was honored as first recipient of the "Red Nose" award by the Southern Baptist Association of Clowns in Ministry.

"Gospel clowns can perform almost anywhere and draw in multitudes of people who would never come to church to hear about Jesus," said Liebig, of Bullard, Texas, who performs as "Happy the Clown."

With his wife, Jean as "JJ the Clown," Liebig has performed and taught clowning as a gospel ministry to thousands of people across the Southern Baptist Convention. They are two of more than 1,000 Texas Baptists serving for up to two years in home and foreign missions with the state convention's Mission Service Corps volunteer program.

Initially, gospel clowning wasn't readily accepted, said Everett Robertson, the Liebigs' supervisor and senior drama specialist in the Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department for more than 20 years.

"Some Baptists looked on it as making fun of the gospel, and some thought it was even blasphemous. But puppetry helped bring down the barriers, and once pastors saw the effectiveness of clowning one-on-one in a street setting, many of them have begun using it in ministry."

"Clowning opens doors," said Jean Liebig. "Everybody loves a clown."

"If I took 10 people out to hand out gospel tracts, people would shy away from them. But I can take the same people dressed as clowns, and people will flock around them."

The Liebigs wrote a book, "Clowning Is...", dealing with all aspects of gospel clowning, and he co-authored "The Ministry of Clowning," the Sunday School Board's main leadership manual on clowning.

Despite his busy schedule as manager of Timberline Encampment near Lindale for 10 years, Liebig managed to squeeze in time to promote gospel clowning across the Southern Baptist Convention while also serving as a pioneer in Southern Baptist disaster relief.

While doing disaster relief with Texas Baptist Men following the Mexico City earthquake in 1985, Liebig was asked by officials -- concerned about unrest among the homeless people -- to perform for a large crowd. After Liebig told what Christ means in his life and why he was there, he demonstrated his clown ministry. Afterward, about 400 people stood in line to talk with Southern Baptist counselors about Jesus.

His retirement as a camp manager in 1988 allowed the Liebigs to spend more time in the clowning ministry. Last year they traveled 33,000 miles, doing 132 engagements. Besides performing and teaching, they helped begin clown ministries in 27 churches.

To show how far Southern Baptists have come in recognizing the art of clowning as a ministry, the Liebigs have been asked to teach a three-hour credit course in gospel clowning in May at Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, Mo.

Sojourner, summer missions  
deadline is March 10

By David Winfrey

ATLANTA (BP)--March 10 is the deadline for volunteer applications to be a Sojourner or student summer missionary with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The Sojourner program is for high school students who have completed their junior or senior year. Sojourners work as volunteers six to 10 weeks in full-time home missions service. Food and housing are provided.

The student summer missions program is for college students who serve 10 weeks in full-time summer missions work. Housing and food are provided for student summer missionaries, who also receive assistance with transportation to and from their assignment and a \$600 stipend.

More information about volunteer opportunities is available from state convention offices or the Home Mission Board at 1-800-HMB-VOLS.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Calvinists often misunderstood, according to journal writers," dated 2/8/95, please change the 13th paragraph to indicate Tom Nettles is a former professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, not Southern Seminary as written.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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