



December 11, 1967
PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Eighth in a Series)

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Where The Action Is

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

"The business world is where the action is." This was a statement by the president of a Chamber of Commerce to a group of college students. He was encouraging them to choose business as a career.

Several bright young ministers, in recent years, have resigned their pastorates to enter some type of government service. Some of them have justified their action by saying, "I want to be where the action is."

The implication is that the ministry and the church are not where the action is.

What is meant by the expression "where the action is"? Most who use it doubtlessly mean that it is the place where something important or significant is happening. Those who have a service motive may use the expression to refer to the type of service where they feel that they can come to grips with the real problems of people, the significant issues of our world.

Most of us would like to be where the action is. How can we know where it is? Really, can we know?

From the Christian perspective the real action is where God is at work in the world. It is the Christian's belief, however, that God is creatively active in the total life of the world. He may be unusually active in some phase of the life of the world at a particular point in time. But who would claim to be wise enough to know where that place is?

A young minister recently asked some very pertinent questions about "where the action is." He asked, "How can we know where the really significant action is?" "Can any man know where God is at work in some unusual way?"

He further asked, "Would any one have thought when Jesus was born that the real action was not in Caesar's household but in a manger at an inn in the village of Bethlehem?"

So it has been through the centuries: the real action, the place where God was unusually active in the life of the world has frequently been in some quiet spot, in some event little known by any except those immediately involved and God himself.

This means, among other things, that we should be careful about comparing the importance of places or types of service.

The place where "the action is" for me may be quite different from "the place where the action is" for you. Each of us in our own way and in our own place is to work for and with God. And if we are where He wants us, that is "where the action is" for us.

Some may have a sense of divine mission while serving as a business man, a farmer, a professional man, or in some phase of the political life of the community, state, or nation. Still others may feel that "where the action is" for them is as a housewife, a school teacher, or in a church-related vocation at home or overseas.

Each child of God should have a deepening conviction that what he is doing and where he is doing it is within the will of God. He can be sure if he is permitting God to work out his will in him and through him that he is, in the deepest and truest sense, "where the action is."

No one of us should ever belittle the service of another. Ours may be a place of prestige and power. His may be in some isolated spot unknown to any except the Lord. He may be, however, in a place where God in some unusual way and to an unusual degree is working out his purposes for the world.



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PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
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The Church: Gathered and Scattered
By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The contemporary church has many critics. Some of its critics speak from within the church; others from without. Some are sympathetic and constructive; others are cynical, sarcastic, and destructive. Whatever the source or the spirit of the criticism, it will be wise for church leaders to evaluate objectively every criticism.

Many critics of the institutional church correctly suggest that it is too exclusively concerned about itself: its buildings, its organization, its program, its prestige in the world.

They contend that the church is in the world to serve. Some of them insist that to serve the world most effectively, the church must be a scattered rather than a gathered church.

In reality, the church needs to be and is both a gathered and a scattered church. The effectiveness of its ministry in and to the world will depend on how well it keeps in balance these two aspects of its life: gathered from the world and in turn scattered in and for the world.

This means, among other things, that there still may be an important place for the so-called institutionalized church so frequently ridiculed by its critics.

The church, as the people of God, is first gathered by the Lord from the world and separated unto him and his purposes. We, through our efforts, may add names to the rolls of our churches but God alone can add them to the church. We are to be a holy people, dedicated to his purposes in the world.

The church is not only composed of those who have been gathered by the Lord, its members should also periodically be gathered together for the Lord.

We should come together for fellowship with one another and with the Lord. We need to be instructed in the Word and work of the Lord. We need to join together in the worship of the Lord. Many church members should heed the admonition of the writer of Hebrews that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

It is the very nature of the church to be a scattered as well as a gathered church. The church is wherever we its members are on Monday through Saturday as well as on Sunday. We are our church where we live, work, and play as well as where we worship.

In other words, all we need to do to make a greater impact for God on the world is for us to recognize that we are the scattered church and then to live a more consistent Christian life in the world.

It is possible that too many of us have considered what we do on Sunday and within the walls of our church building as our total or at least our most significant service for the Lord. We should remember that our God is not only the God of Sunday and the sanctuary; he is also the God of Monday and the work-a-day world.

Let us never forget, however, that we should gather regularly with fellow church members. Our inner spiritual resources need to be renewed. We need a deepened sense of the presence of the Lord and a renewed dedication to his work in the church and in the world.

We can sum up by saying that we as a church have been gathered from the world by the Lord and in turn we are scattered by him to do his work in the world.

For the most effective ministry in and to the world, we will need to maintain in our lives a constant interplay of gathering and scattering.



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PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Tenth in a Series)

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THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

By T. B. Maston

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As children of God we have been brought into a vital life-changing union with the resurrected Christ. Many of us are lacking in warmth and compassion because we have not let the compassionate Christ express himself in us and through us as fully as we should have.

Let us notice three things concerning the compassion of Christ and examine our lives in the light of what is revealed in his life and ministry.

First, his compassion was particularized or individualized as well as generalized.

The generalization of his compassion is revealed by the statement that "when he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion on them" (Matt. 9:36). He saw the multitude as sheep without a shepherd and as a harvest that was plenteous while the laborers were few.

Have you and I seen the multitude in New York and Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston, and our other great cities? Have we seen the restless moving masses in Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo, and the other big cities of our world? Many of us have seen the multitude but have we felt a tug of heart for the masses of humanity in our world? In other words, do we have the compassionate heart?

Christ not only had compassion on the multitude, he also had compassion on individuals. He had compassion on the widow of Nain, (Luke 7:11-15), on two blind men (Matt. 20:30-34), on a leper (Mark 1:40-42), and on many others who were in need. Practically all of his miracles expressed his compassion for people. To repeat: his compassion was individualized as well as generalized.

A second characteristic of the compassion of Christ was that it was universalized rather than compartmentalized.

His compassion was not restricted to any particular group. He reached out in concern and compassion to all kinds of people. There was no evidence in his life of class or color consciousness.

His compassion for people, in another sense, was not compartmentalized. He had compassion for people in their totality. He did not separate them into body, mind, and spirit.

We tend, too frequently, to compartmentalize our compassion. Some of us talk about "a passion for souls" as if the soul could be separated from the person. Our compassion for unsaved men and women would be more effective if we had compassion for them as people.

Another characteristic of the compassion of Christ was the fact that his compassion was not a vaporized sentimentality; it was expressed in practical, helpful ways.

He had compassion on the multitude and fed their hungry, healed their sick, relieved their suffering, forgave their sinfulness. He had compassion on the widow of Nain and restored her son to life, on the two blind men and opened their eyes, on the leper and touched and healed him.

While we do not have the power to perform miracles, we should and can find practical ways to express our compassion for people. At times we may even lack the facilities or the capacity to relieve human needs, but at least our hearts can and should reach out in compassion and sympathy to all types of people under all kinds of conditions.

Do we really have the compassion for people that we should have? Is our compassion individualized as well as generalized, universalized rather than compartmentalized? Does it find practical ways to express itself or is it simply a beautiful generality that does not touch the real needs of real people?



December 11, 1967

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
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The New Morality

By T. B. Maston

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The new morality has become a favorite topic of conversation among many people, particularly among college young people.

It will be a mistake for ministers and particularly for workers with youth to ignore, ridicule, or discuss without special preparation the new morality. An abundance of materials in books and magazines by exponents and opponents of the movement are readily available in bookstores and libraries.

An examination of the writings of the originators and advocates of the new morality (Robinson, Fletcher, Pike, and others) may convince us that they provide some helpful insights and emphases.

Personally, I can appreciate their positive interpretation of the Christian life and the central place that is given to love. At the same time, I believe that they go too far when they insist that love is the only measure of what is right and good. For them nothing is inherently or intrinsically good except love.

Furthermore, I believe that their emphasis on love is not well balanced. Advocates of the new morality do not give proper attention to love for God, which, after all, is the first commandment. Many of us need to be reminded of the "second like it," but we would insist that love for God is basic.

The new morality is too largely man-centered. The biblical ethic and the Christian life in general is primarily God-centered.

Also, love can be made central in the Christian ethic without eliminating some place for rules and principles.

We can properly raise the question, "How can one know what love would dictate?" It needs to be informed or guided unless one would accept the position of (John A.T.) Robinson that love "has a built-in moral compass, enabling it to 'home' intuitively upon the deepest need of the other." Who would dare to claim, however, that this has been true in his own personal experience?

Really, the new morality assumes a moral and spiritual maturity that is unrealistic. Its exponents like to quote Augustine's famous statement: "Love and do what you please." This may sound beautiful but whose love approaches closely enough to the divine ideal to make this statement an adequate and safe guide for daily conduct?

The results of the new morality have been especially unfortunate among some young people, particularly college students. "Love" for many of them cannot be separated from the romantic conceptions of love.

Also, unfortunately, the more popular proponents of the new morality have predominantly used sex relations to illustrate that love is the only valid absolute in the area of moral conduct.

They contend that whatever love would approve is right. They further suggest that this may mean that premarital sex and adultery, under certain conditions, may be right.

One can easily understand how some immature young people and even mature adults would use such statements to justify or defend their own loose sexual practices.

There is considerable possibility that such individuals fail to understand what "love" really is, particularly love with a distinctly Christian flavor.



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December 11, 1967

Sunday School Department
Announces Reorganization

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NASHVILLE (BP)--The Sunday School department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board reorganized its structure, dividing the department into five sections instead of the former 10 units.

"The reorganization came about to facilitate the decisions made in December, 1966, regarding the new grouping-grading plans suggested for use in Southern Baptist churches," said W. L. Howse, director of the board's education division.

The new structure brings together the field services and the editorial services. These were formerly separate units.

Named supervisor of the new weekday-Vacation Bible School and associational section is Earl Waldrup, former supervisor of the Sunday School department's associational unit.

Robert G. Fulbright, the department's former supervisor of the children's unit, will be supervisor of the new preschool and children's section.

Supervisors for the three other new sections--general administration section, adult section, and youth section--have not been named.

According to A. V. Washburn, secretary of the Sunday School department, "The simplification of the structure brings about a better distribution of authority and unification of work."

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"Build Fire In Pulpit"
Cliche Becomes Reality

1155

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YUBA CITY, Calif. (BP)--The admonition for preachers to "build a fire in the pulpit" turned out to be more than just a cliché at the Cooper Avenue Baptist Church here.

A fire broke out at the church destroying the rear portion of the building with damage estimated at \$20,000. The fire raged for two hours before firemen brought it under control.

The fire "appeared to have started behind the church pulpit," according to local sources, but there was no immediate indication how it started.

Some jokingly suggested that the last sermon preached by Pastor Don Bergerbn really must have been a scorcher.

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Reds In Orient Preach
Hate America, Lee Says

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The executive secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, recently returned from a tour of the Orient, said here that Communists in the Far East are doing everything in their power to make Orientals hate America.

Furthermore, Lee told the faculty and students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the Communists equate America and Christianity. This makes Christian mission work in that part of the world increasingly difficult, he observed.

Lee told the seminary audience that he was impressed and overwhelmed by the tremendous masses of people everywhere in every Oriental nation he visited.

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1154-1156

Armes Named Texas Baptist
Education Commission Head

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DALLAS (BP)--Woodson Armes, pastor of the First Baptist Church of El Paso, Tex., has been elected secretary of the Christian Education Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Armes, pastor of the El Paso church since Jan. 1, 1964, will succeed E. N. Jones in the position effective Jan. 1, 1968. Jones retires Dec. 31.

The 55-year-old minister is a former Bible teacher at Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and former pastor of Seventh and James Baptist Church in Waco, and Polytechnic Baptist Church in Fort Worth. He is a graduate of Baylor and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In other actions, the 192-member Texas Baptist Executive Board approved loans up to \$3.7 million for Baptist institutions in Texas, and elected two other staff members and a new chairman.

Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, was granted permission to borrow \$2 million as part of a \$14 million expansion program; Mary Hardin-Baylor College, Belton, Tex., was given the "go ahead" on a \$1 million loan for renovation and construction, Baptist Memorial Hospital in San Antonio, was authorized to borrow \$500,000, and High Plains Baptist Hospital in Amarillo was given approval for a \$200,000 loan.

The board elected B. J. Martin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church of Pasadena, Tex., as its new chairman succeeding W. M. Shamburger of Tyler, Tex., Bill Austin, pastor in Vernon, Tex., was named vice-chairman.

Douglas G. Brown was promoted to secretary of the church stewardship department from associate in the department, succeeding Cecil A. Ray who becomes director of the stewardship division on Jan. 1.

Elected as director of Christian social missions for the convention was Lloyd Hickman Henderson Jr., who currently is pastor-director of the Baptist Mission Center in Fort Worth. Henderson will work in the convention's direct missions department, with a major emphasis on church community weekday ministries, Baptist mission centers, literacy work, juvenile and prisoner rehabilitation.

Both the president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its executive secretary had high praise for Armes, the newly-elected Christian Education Commission secretary and one of six top executives of the convention.

T. A. Patterson, the executive secretary, said Armes would be well received by the entire staff, and would "make a great contribution to the program of Christian education in Texas." Convention President Gordon Clinard of San Angelo, Tex., called Armes' election "most fortunate".

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Georgia Sunday School
Associate Elected

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ATLANTA (BP)--A. Jerrell Pritchett, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Lithonia, Ga., has been named associate secretary in the Sunday School department of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

A native of Cochran, Ga., Pritchett, 34, is a graduate of Mercer University, Macon, Ga., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth.

As an associate in the Sunday School department, Pritchett will lead in promotion of Vacation Bible School work, and in the development of church libraries, church kindergartens and week-day Bible study.

Julian T. Pipkin of Atlanta is secretary of the Sunday school department for Georgia Baptists.

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Hardin Simmons Names
New Personnel Director

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12/11/67

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ABILENE, Tex. (BP)--Marvin W. Sapaugh has been named director of personnel and assistant cashier at Hardin-Simmons University here, Elwin L. Skiles, president, said.

Prior to accepting the position at Hardin-Simmons, the 27-year-old native of Sulphur Springs, Tex., was affiliated with the office of personnel of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville.

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