



January 26, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Twelfth in a Series)

SITUATION ETHICS

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The advocates of situation ethics, another name for the new morality, suggest that moral obligation is relative to the situation. Rules, laws, and principles may be illuminators of the situation; they are not authoritative in the situation.

This article will not discuss situation ethics in general. It will be restricted to a consideration of the importance of the situation in determining what is right or wrong.

It is unfortunate that the word "situation" has been identified with the new morality. One may differ drastically from the typical situationalist and yet believe that the situation may be an important and in some cases a determinative factor in a time of moral decision.

A biblical example of what might be considered a situation approach is Paul's instruction concerning the eating of meat offered to idols (Rom. 14 and I Cor. 8). He was writing to people facing a particular problem in a particular situation.

If we look beneath the surface, however, we will discover some principles that can help us any time we face a decision concerning right or wrong.

One such principle is that a Christian should conform to the culture in which he finds himself except when such conformity would necessitate a compromise of basic moral convictions.

There is another important guiding principle evident in what Paul said. It is clearly suggested that a Christian cannot determine what is right or wrong for him to do without giving consideration to what others think. The effect of what he does on others should be an important factor in his decision.

The latter principle is abidingly relevant. It is applicable to widely differing situations.

The preceding correctly implies that an activity that may be right in itself can, because of the situation, become wrong for the child of God. It should be added, however, that any action or activity that is wrong within itself or considered wrong by the child of God cannot be made right for him because of the attitude of others toward it.

The maturing Christian has the right and the responsibility increasingly to make his own decisions concerning what is right and wrong for him to do. This does not mean, however, that the source of authority rests within himself.

The ultimate authority is in God. The supreme question for a Christian in any time of decision is, "What is the will of God?" His most difficult and perplexing problems are how he can know the will of God and, once knowing it, how he can do it.

The laws and principles found in the Scriptures can be a major source of help to the Christian in any time of decision. It is his responsibility to interpret and then to apply these laws and principles to his particular situation.

Some of these laws and principles may simply be, as the situationalists say, illuminators. Others, because they have been so thoroughly tested and so universally accepted, may speak an authoritative word to the situation.

Also, the child of God should never forget that in every situation he can have the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This source of help is almost totally ignored by contemporary situationalists. One of them (Fletcher) claims that love and reason are the only things that count "when the chips are down."

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Without belittling one iota love or reason, it should be added that the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit are the most important sources of help "when the chips are down."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Additional features in this series will be mailed next week.



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

REGIONAL OFFICES

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 161 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30303, Telephone (404) 523-2593

DALLAS R. T. McCartney, Editor, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) RI 1-1996

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

BUREAU

BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,
Telephone (615) 254-1631

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Arkansas Baptist Editorial
Prompts Lower Postage Charge

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--An editorial in The Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine has prompted United States Postmaster General Lawrence O'Brien to decrease the amount of postage charged to religious publications for change-of-address notices.

The editorial, published in the January 18 issue of the official publication of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, was sent to the Postmaster General by Editor Erwin L. McDonald, and it got action.

O'Brien, as a result of reading the Baptist editorial, has reduced the postal fee charged for each change of address from 15 cents (the new rate) to the 10 cent fee that was charged before the rate increase.

A special assistant to O'Brien, Ira Kapenstein, wrote McDonald saying that O'Brien "read with concern your letter relating to the hardships involved for your publication in connection with the 15-cent charge for every change of address supplied.

"In fact, in recognition of the need for an adjustment in this fee for various mailer groups, Mr. O'Brien has reduced the charge to 10 cents for each address," the letter said.

The Postmaster General's office did not indicate what types of publications would receive benefits from this lowered rate. The policy statement apparently yet is to be worked out.

In his original editorial, McDonald wrote that "The Post Office Department is getting harder and harder for us poor folks to live with. Not only did they go up on postage this month, but they now charge us 15 cents for each and every notice of a change of address on our mailing list.

"And since we now have about 60,000 on our weekly mailing list, you can see what the bankruptcy possibilities are for us if our readers do not remember to notify us promptly---in advance, when possible---of the possible change of address.

"And if anybody doubts our poverty," McDonald concluded, "we just get 16 cents a month for our rag! So, dear readers, please, please anticipate your every move as far ahead as possible and notify us promptly."

The letter from the Postmaster General's office indicated that change-of-address kits are available which include handy cards for persons who are moving. The kits are designed especially to advise publishers of changes of address, the letter said.

In response to the letter, McDonald wrote a second editorial saying that Washington officialdom "is not as far removed from the hinterland as we had thought."

"Out of all proportion to the amount of saving the action of the Postmaster General will bring to our postage account, we are grateful," the editorial concluded. "It is so reassuring to know that we have in the high office of Postmaster General a man who is approachable and who has compassion. Thank you, Mr. Postmaster General."

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Southeastern Lectures Set

1/26/68

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Max G. Rogers, associate professor of Old Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here, will deliver the spring convocation lecture at the seminary (Jan. 31).

Rogers will lecture on "Some complexities in Israel's Earliest Existence." A native of Durham, N. C., Rogers is a graduate of Duke University, Union Theological Seminary, and Columbia University.

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Arkansas Board Votes
Aid To Smaller States

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--The Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board approved here several financial assistance plans to aid Baptist work in Colorado, Michigan, and Utah-Idaho.

The board also set several policy rulings for its summer encampments, and authorized employment of a new Brotherhood department secretary, although no individual was named to the position.

A check for \$10,000 was forwarded to the Colorado Baptist General Convention to help support the Greater Denver Evangelistic Crusade next July. It was reported that several Arkansas Baptist pastors and music directors would be participating in the crusade.

The board voted to "help in every way possible" in fulfilling a request by the executive secretary of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, former Arkansas resident Fred Hubbs, who asked assistance in the Project 500 program in Michigan.

Project 500, a nation-wide Baptist effort to establish 500 new churches and church-type missions in strategically located cities, will be aided financially by the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions. The Arkansas board increased its Annie Armstrong offering goal by \$1 million to assist in the project.

The board is also providing \$2,500 to the Idaho-Utah Southern Baptist Convention to help establish 400 Home Fellowships for Bible study. The Arkansas board voted to provide travel expenses for pastors in this area at the rate of 8 cents per mile.

In another action, the Arkansas board will recommend to the state convention that the Baptist Student Union be placed under a separate board of trustees made up of 18 members.

Policies were adopted permitting girls at the convention's summer camps and assemblies to wear shorts during recreation periods, but preventing "short shorts", "mid-riffs", and "mixed swimming."

Employment of a secretary for the Brotherhood department will probably not be completed until next fall, convention officials said. Nelson Tull, former Brotherhood secretary, retired recently.

Two major trips were authorized for convention leaders. The convention's executive secretary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Whitlow, were authorized to attend the annual meeting of the state executive secretaries, and Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine Editor Erwin L. McDonald was authorized to go to Indonesia in May or June for an evangelistic crusade sponsored and financed by the John Haggai Evangelistic Association.

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Simmons Named Samford
Development Director

1/26/68

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Samford University has named George T. Simmons as its director of development, Samford President Leslie S. Wright said here.

Simmons previously was the chief administrative assistant to the Mayor of Birmingham, coordinating 18 departments and 13 boards and agencies.

At the Baptist school, he will provide leadership for Samford's \$15 million development program designed to complete nine additional major buildings and provide additional endowment.

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