



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

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PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Sixteenth in a series)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND SOCIAL CONCERN

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Southern Baptists are expressing more concern than formerly for people and for social conditions in general. This is encouraging to many of us.

Is there a solid basis for such concern? There are a number of bases, but these bases are ultimately grounded in the nature of God. Through our union with Christ we have been brought into the family of God.

Our heavenly Father expects us to be like him--like him in character and in concern.

For example, the limits of our concern should be determined by the limits of his concern. As the sovereign God of the universe, he was and is interested in the totality of life. His concern is limitless.

He is concerned about what we do on Sunday in the house that has been dedicated to his worship and service. But, he is also concerned about what we are and what we do on Monday through Saturday in our home and neighborhood, where we work and play, on the streets--everywhere.

He is also concerned and we should be concerned about every aspect of the lives of those we touch from day to day. And we should remember that he knows no color or cultural limits. God is concerned for the total life of all people. We, the children of God, should be impartial in our concern for the total life of all men.

Because the God revealed in the scriptures was impartial he showed a special concern for the neglected and underprivileged. His prophets in the Old Testament were defenders of the poor, the widows, the orphans, and the strangers. We believe that God continues to have a special interest in the neglected and that the same thing will be true of his prophets in every age.

Jesus who revealed fully the Father reached out in a particular way to those who suffered, the handicapped, and the moral and social outcasts of his day. If we walk in his way, we will reach out in compassion and concern to all kinds of people and particularly to those in the neglected segments of our society.

The sovereign God is not only interested in the totality of the life of the individual, he is also concerned about every phase of the life of the world. God who is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore is seeking to work out his will and purpose among all peoples in every part of the world. He is creatively active in Vietnam, in Moscow, as well as in Washington.

The preceding provides a basis for our concern as individual Christians, as churches, and as a denomination in the affairs of our nation and other nations of the world.

It is the sovereignty of God that sets the proper limits of our concern. It also provides the most effective motive or dynamic for social action and concern.

We also believe that the sovereign God's purposes for the world will ultimately be achieved. If we are cooperating with him in his work in the world, we can rest assured that there will come a time of ultimate victory when the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. 11:15).



March 12, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Seventeenth in a series)

"ISSUES AND ANSWERS"

By T. B. Maston

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This is the title of a series of pamphlets by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Ten were released in the fall of 1967. They are: Alcohol, Communism, Gambling, Honesty, Juvenile Delinquency, Mass Media, Peace, Pornography, Poverty, and Race Relations.

A single copy of each of these pamphlets may be secured free from The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tennessee 37219. Additional copies are 5 cents each.

These pamphlets are attractive in format and informative in content. An encouraging aspect of them is the fact that they not only set forth the issues, they also suggest answers. It is easier to analyze problems than to recommend solutions.

It is true, of course, that the first step toward a solution is an understanding of the issue or problem. This means that the portions of the pamphlets that outline the issues are really a part of the answer.

In some cases, the suggested answers or solutions are more strictly practical; in other cases, more idealistic. Whether primarily practical or idealistic or theoretical, they are challenging.

Some pamphlets are more sharply outlined than others. For example, the pamphlet on Communism includes the following suggested "answers": "Take communism seriously"; "Beware of the conditions which contribute to Communism"; "Avoid panic"; "Take Christ seriously"; "Accept the social imperatives of the gospel"; "Demonstrate the superiority of the Christian way of life"; "Preach the whole gospel." Each "answer" is spelled out to a limited degree.

Some answers are more immediately applicable to individual Christians, others to groups of Christians or to churches. For instance, the pamphlet on race relations suggests answers "On the personal level," "In the family," "In your church," and "In daily life."

The Christian Life Commission also offers single copies of approximately fifty other pamphlets for one dollar (\$1.00). You can also secure from the Commission a list of all the pamphlets it has available.

Under the direction of Foy Valentine, the Christian Life Commission seeks to provide leadership for Southern Baptists in the area of applied Christianity. Many of us believe that our failure to apply consistently our Christian faith to social and moral issues is the weakest spot in Southern Baptist life. The Gospel we preach and teach is much better than the Gospel we practice or live.

The latter explains the fact that what the Christian Life Commission says to Southern Baptists is sometime resisted. Most of us do not like for our weaknesses and inconsistencies to be pointed out to us.

Increasingly, however, Southern Baptists have come to appreciate the contributions of the Commission to our Baptist life. Pamphlets such as the present series will add to the stature and ministry of the Commission.

Pastors, teachers, and workers in every phase of the work of our churches will find helpful material in these pamphlets.

March 12, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Eighteenth in a series)

DENOMINATIONAL POLITICS

By T. B. Maston

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Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Some contend that nothing should be said in public, particularly in print, about denominational politics. My viewpoint is that there is little hope for correction of the situation unless Baptists generally know about it.

It is also suggested that we should expect a certain amount of politics in denominational life. Such seems to be inevitable in a democracy.

Also, pastors and others who are involved in denominational work are human. Many of them have the ambitions of the natural man and we should expect, so it is claimed, that some of them would use political methods to gain the recognition they desire.

We may admit the validity of the preceding, but insist that as much political maneuvering as we have had in recent years is unhealthy and is a real threat to our spiritual democracy.

Many Southern Baptists may doubt if the problem is real. I have personally been convinced that it is a very real problem.

I have been told of gatherings in hotel rooms at state conventions, but particularly at Southern Baptist Conventions, that mapped out strategies to elect a certain person to a particular office.

I have even heard of trade-outs: "If you will get me elected to a certain committee, I will get you or a friend or relative of yours elected to an important committee or to the board of one of our institutions or agencies."

Campaigns are made to get an honorary degree for a particular individual or to secure recognition for him as a "distinguished alumni."

Unfortunately, many individuals who seek through political means and pressure to gain position and prestige for themselves succeed. It is rather interesting that the positions and recognition that are most frequently sought are those where the prestige of the position is much more prominent than the work to be performed.

This may be one reason why the executive leadership of Southern Baptists, in the main, has been and is of the highest type. Also, such leadership is selected by a comparatively small group, such as a board.

Politics more frequently enter when a position is filled by popular vote. Too many Baptists are swayed by an appeal to prejudice. Their emotions rather than their intellect determine how they vote.

Let us do what we can to keep denominational politics clean. If there is to be any political maneuvering, let it at least be done by friends rather than by oneself. Also, let those friends do it without any suggestion from the individual. And, by all means, if we are going to have politics, let us never be involved in any trades.

Would it not be a wonderful thing if everyone who was elected to fill a position of trust and honor in the local church, the association, the state convention, or the Southern Baptist Convention was someone who had not sought the place personally or through his friends.

One answer to politics in the denomination is for more of our best, most capable, and thoroughly trained and dedicated pastors and laymen to become actively involved in denominational life. More of these men need to be willing to get their hands a little dirty, if need be, by mixing in denominational politics. Sometimes the more personally ambitious men take over the organizational structure of the denomination by default.



March 12, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Nineteenth in a series)

VIETNAM: COST AND CASUALTIES

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Many of us are indifferent to the war in Vietnam, unless we have loved ones directly involved in it. Some of us evidently do not even want to be disturbed by it. On the other hand, there seems to be a growing number of people with a deep-seated uneasiness about the war.

This uneasiness, to some degree, stems from a sense of frustration that our country, the most powerful in the world, does not seem to be able to bring the war to a successful conclusion.

The increasing uneasiness also stems from the mounting cost of the war in money and men. The following questions are being asked: Is what we are fighting for worth the cost? Would it be wiser to use our material and human resources at home in an effort to solve some of our pressing problems?

The cost of the war in money is beyond our imagination. The Federal budget for 1968, approved by both houses of Congress, includes \$69.9 billion for the Defense Department. That is almost twice the amount needed for the entire federal budget twenty years ago.

All of the defense budget does not go for Vietnam, but approximately \$25 billion is definitely earmarked for the war. There is no way to know how much of the remainder is directly or indirectly related to Vietnam. It has been estimated that the cost of the war will soon reach \$2.5 billion per month. If my arithmetic is correct, that would mean over \$800 million a day.

The latest report reveals that the United States has lost over 1,000 planes in combat, with the overall loss of approximately 3,000 aircraft of all kinds and from all causes. The material losses, however, are insignificant when compared to the loss of lives and the human suffering caused by the war.

The Department of Defense reported 88,886 casualties from Jan. 1, 1961, to Oct. 7, 1967, with slightly over half of these (47,483) seriously enough wounded to be hospitalized.

The total American military personnel killed up to the end of 1967 was approximately 16,000. More than half of these were killed in 1967. What is going to be the story in the months ahead? In addition, there are the casualties among the South Vietnamese and the troops from other countries fighting on our side.

Certainly as Christians we should also be concerned about the casualties suffered by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. They also are human beings, created in the image of God and people for whom Christ died.

In addition, the civilian casualties are running extremely high. There is no reliable report of the number. It is estimated that there were 100,000 to 150,000 civilian casualties in 1967. Many of these are left crippled for life because of inadequate facilities to care for them.

As Christians we may not have the resources to answer all of our questions about the war. We may be uncertain about our attitude toward the war. However, there should be no uncertainty about our concern and compassion for those who suffer because of the war.

March 12, 1968

"Sign Of Fish" Indicates
Coffee House Youth Training

By Adon Taft

MIAMI, Fla. (BP)--"The Sign of the Fish" hangs over an old fraternal order meeting hall here, but it doesn't signify just another of the nation's 1,000 church-run coffee houses.

Rather, it signifies a unique project of the young people of Central Baptist Church here who have been willing to work hard to train themselves in leading a unique ministry to youth.

About 200 young people in the church did the painting, lighting and other chores which transformed the old meeting hall into a sophisticated club for the youthful.

About 20 of the high school seniors, college students, and working young men and women who staff the coffee house each had to take an eight-week training course.

The course included study of a modern translation of the gospels, two books on working with drug addicts and gang members, a book on the coffee house ministry, and one on personal witnessing.

In addition they had to "take the pledge" to pray daily for the project and to work for four months in the coffee house. The pledge is renewable at the end of the four months or at any later date.

"We don't hope to solve everybody's problems," pointed out Frank Vann, president of the youth council at the church.

"But we do want to share their troubles and trials," added Glen Skaggs, a young draftsman for Dade County (Miami) who is one of those responsible for the psychedelic-like decor in the 80 talbe "Sign of the Fish."

"It's a good place to come and dialogue," Skaggs added.

Dialogue is a part of the program of the coffee house. The dialogue is being led by Paul Wilson, who has done the same thing for the coffee houses at the north campus of Miami-Dade Junior College and the University of Miami.

The program also features typical coffee house music from such groups as the "Young Generation of Folk," and "The Midnight Blues."

From time to time, there will be "discussion movies" as a stimulus for dialogue.

An ecumenical aspect is looming, said Vann, who said the youth "hope to get the young people from other churches to help" with the coffee house.

The guiding light behind the coffee house project at the church has been Mrs. Grover Angell, youth director, who gives much of the credit to the youth. They're a pretty special bunch of kids, she says.

"Prayer has been a big part of this," Mrs. Angell said, noting that the project has been two year aborning. She added that the staff holds a devotional period before the coffee house opens each night, as the youth seek to become fishers of men.

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Adon Taft is religion editor for the Miami Herald.

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March 12, 1968

**N. C. Editor Asks Baptist
Priority On Ghetto Crises**

RALEIGH, N. C. (BP)--A Southern Baptist state paper editor has suggested that some convention projects may have to be shelved temporarily while the denomination concentrates energies and resources on the urban crises.

Editor Marse Grant of the Biblical Recorder in North Carolina, cited the decision by the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. (Southern) to earmark \$227,500 to fight causes of race riots in big city ghettos, and then wrote:

"We would like to see Southern Baptists take bold steps in similar directions.

"It may be that a good program like Project 500 will have to wait while efforts are directed to the urban crises. Southern Baptists could give a million dollars as easily as the Presbyterians gave \$227,500."

(Project 500 is the denomination's two-year effort to start 500 new churches in particularly strategic locations in newer areas of Baptist work.)

Grant cited the SBC Home Mission Board's concern for inner-city ministries and said any emergency efforts directed at ghetto life would be in keeping with the philosophy of home missions leadership.

Reacting to the editorial, Home Mission Board Executive Secretary Arthur B. Rutledge said the Home Mission Board probably will spend between \$1 and \$1½ million in inner-city areas."

Out of the Christian Social Ministries program budget alone, about \$500,000 will be spent in support of personnel and institutions in inner-city areas across the nation.

Paul Adkins, director of the Christian Social ministries program, pointed out that a Baptist center recently has been completed in the section of Detroit that was burned out during rioting last summer.

Other efforts in this program include rehabilitation work with troubled youth, work with ex-prisoners, literacy training and weekday ministries in crowded inner-city areas.

"We're not in suburbia hiding," Adkins said.

"Our emphasis is on helping individuals, and I think we are getting results. We are spending a half-million dollars in the inner city to reach people--people who are hurting."

Edward V. Hill, Negro pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Los Angeles near Watts and chairman of the Los Angeles Housing Commission, reported that the two white US-2 missionaries placed in his church had made a "greater contribution toward cementing of good race relations than anything else in Watts that he had heard of."

Work with National Baptists, language missions and metropolitan missions also are programs of the Home Mission Board that include ministries and funds directed at crowded inner-city life, Rutledge said.

Victor Glass, director of work with National Baptists, said Baptist state conventions and many individual churches had constructive efforts aimed at ghetto problems. He cited the growing resolve of downtown churches to stay downtown and minister, and specifically pointed out the low-cost housing project of the Wheat Street Baptist Church in Atlanta.

"Things can be done outside of the denominational structure," Glass said. "In fact, more money may be available (especially for housing efforts) through approaches outside the denominational level."

Speaker Finds Appropriate
Illustration For Address

BELLEVILLE, Ill. (BP)--A speaker at the state Baptist Young Woman's Auxiliary Conference here found an ideal way to illustrate his addresses on love and marriage, but he almost had to change his sermon titles.

Just before Dale Clemens, pastor of Lakeland Baptist Church in Carbondale, Ill., was to speak to the 400 Baptist girls on the subject of marriage, the host pastor, Eugene W. Daily announced that a couple was on the way to the church to be married.

Although they had planned only a simple ceremony in the pastor's study at Westview Baptist Church where the conference was in progress, both parties agreed to be married publicly before the 400 girls attending the conference.

So to the strains of the traditional Wedding March, Larry F. Hand and Judith Badger proceeded down the aisle. Clemens then delivered his address on marriage, altering it slightly to take the form of a charge to the bridal couple.

His talk was followed by the actual marriage ceremony, performed by the pastor.

Clemens said he was amazed how smoothly his message fitted the occasion. But he did have one problem. His announced topics for two speeches had been "Spring Love" and "Autumn Marriage." To fit the occasion, he almost had to reverse the titles.

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Beauty Contest Cancelled,
Crusade Scheduled Instead

3/12/68

LONG BEACH, Calif. (BP)--In an unusual turn of events, the International Beauty Contest here has been cancelled, freeing the Long Beach Municipal Auditorium for use on the same dates by Southern Baptists staging an Encounter-California crusade.

Although the beauty contest is scheduled for the same comparative week next year, it was the first time in its history that the contest had been cancelled.

Dallas Bivens, pastor of First Baptist Church, Beaumont, Tex., is to be the evangelist for the Long Beach Crusade, one of 42 central crusades being held the week of April 21-26 in major California population centers.

Baptist leaders here, as a result of the unusual turn of events, said they feel God is on their side in the crusade.

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BP PHOTO

3/12/68

SBC HEADQUARTERS HOTEL, The Rice, will be the scene of numerous small group meetings in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention, June 4-7, at nearby Sam Houston Memorial Coliseum. (BP) Photo.

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BP PHOTO

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HOUSTON FROM ABOVE shows blocks of skyscrapers within only a few blocks from the Sam Houston Coliseum where the Southern Baptist Convention meets June 4-7. The Coliseum is pictured at upper left near the expressway. (BP) Photo

BP PHOTO

3/12/68

HOUSTON'S SKYSCRAPERS will greet messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention when they gather June 4-7 for the denomination's annual session. Sessions will be held at the Sam Houston Memorial Coliseum, barely visible at upper right near expressway. (BP) Photo

BP PHOTO

3/12/68

SAM HOUSTON MEMORIAL COLISEUM is the meeting place for the 1968 Southern Baptist Convention June 4-7, in Houston. The Woman's Missionary Union Convention will meet at the adjacent Music Hall to the right of the Coliseum, June 3-4. (BP) Photo

BP PHOTO

3/12/68

THE HOUSTON SPAGHETTI BOWL, a portion of Houston's vast freeway system, symbolically communicates the route that Southern Baptists will be taking to attend the Southern Baptist Convention here June 4-7. The Sam Houston Memorial Coliseum where the convention will be held is pictured at upper right, just East of the expressway complex, a part of Interstate Highway 45 where it intersects with Memorial Drive. (BP) Photo courtesy Texas Highway Department.

BP PHOTO

3/12/68

HOUSTON AT NIGHT sends slivers of light skyward from numerous skyscrapers and downtown buildings. (BP) Photo

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