

March 18, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Twenty-first in a Series)

TENDENCIES THAT THREATEN THE SBC

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics
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We should be grateful to God for his evident blessings on the work of our denomination. At the same time, we should be alert to tendencies that threaten to reduce, if not to destroy, the effectiveness of our work.

There seems to be a tendency to move up the economic ladder and to move away from the common people.

The movement upward seems to be inevitable. The movement away from the common people is not. It is the latter that is a threat to Southern Baptists.

Our strength has been among the laboring people. We must continue to maintain a good rapport with them if we are to have an effective voice in shaping the future. The restless masses are doing more to determine the direction of the contemporary world than any other group.

If we are to counteract the tendency to move away from the common people, we must honor the small church as much as the large church, the poor church as much as the rich church, the "working people's church" as much as "the professional and business people's church".

Second, there seems to be a tendency for our churches to conform to the world rather than to transform the world.

One evidence of this is the tendency to measure the success of our churches in worldly, material terms. We talk entirely too much about the size of budgets and the cost of buildings. The materialistic spirit threatens to capture our churches.

Even some denominational leaders seem to be more concerned about our prestige in the world than in our power to change the world. This is a contributor to some of our problems, such as the tendency to build and to maintain too many and too elaborate institutions.

Third, there is an apparent tendency to resist change in a rapidly changing world.

On the surface, this may sound contradictory to the preceding. We will see that is not when we understand that the major movements of change come up from the masses. These movements are usually resisted by the privileged.

Many, and possibly most, Southern Baptists tend to identify with the status quo. Entirely too many of us have failed to understand that the old ways of life are on the way out.

There are many pastors and even denominational leaders who have not moved into the twentieth century. They take pride in resisting change.

Fourth, there is a tendency to stress quantity more than quality.

There is a need for both, but we need desperately more emphasis on quality in local churches, in our denomination, and in our denominational institutions and agencies.

It seems quite evident that we cannot indefinitely have the quantity without improving the quality. This is true of our evangelistic results, and of the work of our churches and denomination in general.

Fifth, there seems to be a tendency toward a controlled press.

This may be an accomplished fact rather than a tendency. It is, potentially, extremely dangerous.

State denominational papers are owned and controlled by state conventions. They evidently cannot live without convention support.

We should help the editors of those papers to maintain as much independence as possible. This should include resistance to efforts in some states for the papers to be controlled directly by the executive committee or board of the state. We should be grateful for courageous editors, who speak as prophets of God through the pages of their papers.

Let us not forget, however, that a controlled press by a state convention or by an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention is a threat to our churches and our denomination.



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THE BASIC LAWS OF LIFE

By T. B. Maston

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I am convinced that all of life is governed by certain basic laws. Some of these laws are known; others are unknown.

By "basic laws" we mean laws that are written into the nature of man and into the nature of the world in which he lives. God, the creator of man and the world, is the source or the author of these laws.

The basic laws of life are not dependent upon a written formulation of them. Their validity rests in their very nature. Really, the validity of the statutes of any government or governmental agency ultimately depends on whether or not those statutes are grounded in and expressive of the basic laws of God.

These basic laws are as clearly evident in the area of health as anywhere else. Many of the laws of health are known to us. We also know that if we observe those laws, we will have good health. On the other hand, if we ignore or violate them, sickness or ill health will be the eventual result.

This means, among other things, that the penalty for the violation of the basic laws of life is not external to the laws but inherent in the laws. Sooner or later one must pay the price for any violation.

The laws of mental health are not as generally known as those for physical health. It seems clear, however, that they are just as surely operative in one area as in the other. Health of mind as well as of body follows from the observation of certain laws.

What is true of the health of the individual is also true of the health of society and of the institutions of society. Certain basic laws govern human relations, such as the relations of husband and wife, parents and children, employer and employee, and racial, cultural, and national groups.

Insofar as people conform to the laws governing human relations, there will be sound, happy, mutually satisfying relationships. In contrast, if these laws are violated consciously or unconsciously discord and unhappiness will be the result.

God who is the source of these basic laws is greater than those laws. The Creator has the power to control or set aside that which he has created.

It seems, however, that God, with rare exceptions, sees fit to let the basic laws of life operate. This means, among other things, that God is responsible for most that happens to us and to our world, only in the sense that he permits the laws of life or His laws to operate or function.

All of the preceding means that men should seek to know the basic laws of life and, once knowing them, they should conform to or cooperate with them. This is good common sense.

The God who created man knows what is best for man. His basic laws are not given to man primarily to restrict or to restrain him but to release him to creative freedom. It may seem paradoxical but creative freedom can become a reality only to the degree that we live within the restraining influence of the will of God as expressed by the basic laws of life.

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**Navy Chaplain Chief Says
Vietnam War "God Centered"**

FORT WORTH (BP)--The U. S. Navy Chief of Chaplains, Southern Baptist James Kelly, said at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary that there is a "God-centered morality about our involvement" in the Vietnam war.

Rear Adm. Kelly, speaking to students and faculty at the Baptist Seminary here, declared that "we are in the right place to preserve peace in the world," and that "the price we are paying for freedom is worth it."

The Baptist chaplain said that in his 26 years in the military community, he had never before seen such a deep religious concern so mature and expressed with such depth as he had on a recent visit to South Vietnam.

"There is a definite search for and expression of a dynamic and vital faith in God," the chaplain said. "It is evident from church attendance, counseling interviews, handshakes, smiles, courage, bravery, good will, loyalty, love and from the experience of people relating to people."

The top Navy chaplain added that "our humanitarian outreach is making great strides," with servicemen building hospitals, children's homes, and helping the victims of the war.

"Man has come face to face with man in his need and has heard his cry for freedom from enslavement, terror, murder and kidnapping," said Admiral Kelly. "Here is where God speaks to man and they hear his voice."

The Navy chaplain observed that the morale of the troops is high, stable and consistent, primarily because of "the fighting man's conviction that what he personally is doing is crucially important.

"The average young Marine or sailor may not completely see the war as honoring our international commitments or containing militant Communism," he said. "He sees it as defense of an otherwise helpless people from the horrors of Viet Cong terrorism.

"No one needs to tell him about the terrible suffering of the South Vietnamese people at the hands of terrorist gangsters," the chaplain added. "He knows because he sees.

"His perspective also goes a long way toward determining his attitudes toward demonstration and dissent at home. Truth to him is what he sees happening before his eyes.

"He does not always speak kindly of the demonstrators, but because he considers them to be utterly misinformed, neither their actions nor their arguments do more than arouse a passing expression of contempt."

The top Navy chaplain said most servicemen in Vietnam "have heavy hearts when they see the carnage of war. They long for peace. But even at the cost of their lives," he concluded, "they would never abandon a helpless people to the rape and ravage of terror and to the enslavement of ruthless Communism" nor settle for less than a free South Vietnam.

Chaplain Kelly was the keynote speaker for a one-day conference on chaplaincy for ministers, missionaries, and students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Pleitz to Get Doctorate

3/18/68

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. (BP)--The chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, James L. Pleitz of Pensacola, Fla., has been named to receive an honorary doctor of divinity degree at Ouachita Baptist University here.

Pleitz, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Pensacola, will receive the degree from his alma mater during the May commencement when he will be the speaker.

In addition to selecting Pleitz to receive the degree, trustees of the Baptist school approved a \$2.7 million budget, and voted to upgrade its music department to become a school of music with four departments.

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Ted Adams Named To
Southeastern Faculty

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Theodore F. Adams of Richmond, Va., has accepted appointment to the faculty of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary for 1968-1969. He will teach the basic course in preaching.

Adams, retiring pastor of the First Baptist Church of Richmond, was president of the Baptist World Alliance, 1955-1960, and is a member of its Executive Committee.

For decades Adams has been closely identified with the Christian missionary enterprise. He served as a member of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 1940-1950 and 1961-1967.

Active in Baptist religious life in Virginia, he has served as president of the Virginia Baptist Children's Home and is a trustee of the University of Richmond and of Virginia Union University.

Adams has been prominent in the religious, civic and cultural life of Richmond. He has conducted a radio and television ministry for many years. He is a trustee of Richmond Memorial Hospital. He was the recipient of the first Community Service Award from Optimist International, Feb. 19, 1968. On a larger scale his interest in civic life is reflected in his membership on the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Adams received the annual Upper Room citation in 1960. He is a trustee of the Council on Religion and International Affairs and a member of the board of directors, Rockefeller Brothers Theological Fellowship Program.

Widely known for his sermons and lectures, Adams has had three books published by Harper and Row. He has been awarded honorary degrees from nine colleges and universities.

After the public announcement of his retirement as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Richmond, which he served for 32 years, Adams was invited to teach at Southeastern Seminary. He and Mrs. Adams will retain their home in Richmond but will be in residence at the seminary during the academic year.

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New Cartoon Character
To Debut At HemisFair

3/18/68

DALLAS (BP)--A kissing cousin to cartoon character Bro. Blotz will be on hand to greet opening day visitors at HemisFair's Baptist pavilion, Saturday, April 6.

The new cousin, still under wraps by his creator, Doug Dillard of Dallas, will be a featured attraction throughout HemisFair's six-month operation.

Dillard's new creation will be made available to Baptists as well as all HemisFair visitors touring the pavilion. Free autographed cartoons, suitable for framing, will be distributed.

Dillard will be joined on opening day ceremonies by the Manor Baptist Church Choir of San Antonio under the direction of Dwayne Blakeley. The choir will sing at 1:45 p.m., preceding a dedication service scheduled at 2 o'clock.

Representatives of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Baptist General Convention of Texas and the San Antonio Baptist Association also will participate in the dedication services.

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