



June 19, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Thirty-third in a Series)

A LETTER FROM AFRICA

By T. B. Maston
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Jim and Kay Maroney are Missionary Journeymen serving in Ghana. In a recent letter they quoted an editorial from a daily paper in Ghana. It appeared the next day after the assassination of Martin Luther King. According to the Maroneys, every person who can read in Ghana reads the Daily Graphic. The editorial with some abridgment was as follows:

"They have murdered Martin Luther King at last. We knew they were going to do it, for the murder of leaders of Afro-American movements for equality of all races in that country is a symptom of a disease from which America is suffering.

"The latest martyr is by no means the only one who has suffered this fate. They started murdering black people, natives of this continent of Africa a long time ago.

"Only the Father above knows how many bodies of our kinsmen have been thrown into the Atlantic Ocean from the first day the wooden ships set sail from our shores with their cargoes of black men.

"The affluent society is in fact nothing short of a fraudulent society -- a human jungle wherein the black man is the target for destruction.

"There are certain things which transcend national boundaries however domestic their origin. Racial discrimination is one of them.

"Is it our fault that we were made black by the Creator in whom most American whites profess to believe? With the coming into being of our Commercial Radio Service, scarcely does a day pass without the unmistakable voice of the American Christian preacher ranting in the teachings of Christ.

"Whom do these preachers intend to convert to the ways of God? The 'ungodly' black man living in the inner-most recesses of a dark continent called Africa?

"Brother, see the 'beam in your eye' before you point at the 'mote' in your neighbor's! There is no realism about American religious propaganda, and one gets the feeling that all this is a part of a huge commercial syndicate devoted to nothing but the wishes of the flesh.

"We would like the hocus-pocus bunch of American missionaries with their smooth holier than thou manner to know that there is more work in the name of Christ to be done in their country than there is in Africa.

"The time is long past when leaving from Africa with the Bible in the arm-pit was the mark of supreme sacrifice. There is still a supreme sacrifice to be made by missionaries -- but this does not lie in crossing the oceans to far-away places with strange sounding names.

"The sacrifice lies right at the door-step of the missionary's own home, wherever it may be in this world.

"America is a very sick country needing the help of all her truly christian citizens.

"We the 'backward' people of the 'dark' continent of Africa stopped murdering missionaries long ago. We do not create saints anymore. The murder of the men of God is being done now in the civilized countries -- like the United States of America."

The Maroneys themselves had this to say in their letter:

"My friends, if we as Southern Baptists are going to continue to send missionaries to the black races of this world, we had better get this ugly disease out of our lives."

That ugly disease is the disease of racial prejudice and discrimination.

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June 19, 1968

SBC Blends Conservatism,
Liberalism, Editorials Say

By the Baptist Press

The 1968 Southern Baptist Convention in Houston was interpreted by nearly a dozen editorials in Baptist state papers as a unique blend of conservatism and liberal social action, and as a historic turning point in the history of the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

"The convention blended conservative theology with liberal social action in a way that few had believed possible," observed Editor John Roberts of the South Carolina Baptist Courier in a typical editorial comment.

Most of the editorials in the 29 Baptist state papers immediately following the convention emphasized the adoption by the SBC of a strongly-worded statement on the racial crisis in the nation and the election of avowed conservative W. A. Criswell of Dallas as the major factors in the liberal-conservative blend in the convention's fabric.

Several editors called the statement the strongest that the SBC had ever approved on the subject of race relations, and observed that the convention "turned the corner in Houston on the race issue."

Not all of the editorials agreed, however, on whether amendments to the statement significantly altered or weakened the statement, and whether passage of the statement was a victory for "liberals" and a defeat for "conservatives."

"Liberals among Southern Baptists found little in which to exult in the action of this convention," wrote Joe T. Odle, editor of the Mississippi Baptist Record.

The opposite viewpoint was expressed by Erwin L. McDonald, editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, who wrote: "Southern Baptists with liberal, New Testament-oriented views on human relations will now find that they have a new source of moral support."

But most of the editorials seemed to indicate that the convention defied efforts to place a "liberal" or "conservative" tag on its actions, but rather was a blend of the best of both viewpoints. "This convention was marked throughout by a vigorous and balanced blending of conservative and progressive outlook, of evangelism and ethics, of faith and works, of attitude and action, of love and labor," wrote Florida Baptist Witness Editor Guy Stracener.

"There was no lessening of emphasis upon the necessity for a gospel of individual salvation by grace through faith in Christ, but there was an increase of emphasis on our need to become involved in the demonstration of the gospel by our active participation in ministering to others for whom Christ died but whom we have too long neglected," the Florida editorial said.

Editor J. Marse Grant of the Biblical Recorder in North Carolina called the passage of the racial crisis statement "a victory for moderation, tolerance and understanding," and a defeat for "provincialism, racism, and prejudice." Both Grant and Editor Al Shackelford of the Indiana Baptist compared the passage of the strong race statement to adoption of a watered-down substitute statement by the SBC in Atlantic City in 1964, saying, in Grant's words, "the tide is too strong (now) to go backward as they did in 1964 in Atlantic City."

Editor C. R. Daley of the Western Recorder in Kentucky observed in an editorial that Southern Baptists "were reborn" in Houston with passage of the race statement.

"More than any time since the convention's beginning in 1845, Southern Baptists delivered themselves from the stance of identification with a culture that condoned racial inferiority for Negroes and a position of silence on social issues," said Daley.

The California Southern Baptist, in an editorial by J. Terry Young, cited the significance of the statement's calling for action by the SBC Home Mission Board and other convention agencies to deal with the racial crisis, calling this "the strongest stand the convention has ever taken on social responsibility."

The California editorial interpreted the 72.85% majority vote approving passage of the statement as an indication that the SBC is moving toward the center in a proper balance between faith and works, words and deeds, proclamation and performance.

Differing views were expressed in the editorials interpreting the significance of amendments and changes made to the statement on the racial crisis.

Editorials in the Oklahoma and Mississippi papers said that the amendments drastically altered the first draft of the statement as signed by 71 top SBC leaders, while the Kentucky paper said editorially that the statement was adopted "without serious alteration" with only one minor amendment from the convention floor.

The Oklahoma and Mississippi editorials said that the section on "Confession" was sharply changed to eliminate any confession of corporate Southern Baptist guilt of racism.

In a 4-point analysis of changes in the original statement, the South Carolina Baptist Courier noted these changes in the statement: it is milder in tone, especially on the guilt aspect; it reviews past SBC efforts on behalf of the underprivileged; it urges observance of law and order by minority groups; and it calls for the Home Mission Board instead of a task force to take action.

Left in tact were admonitions for Southern Baptist churches and associations to join the SBC in seeking a solution to the racial crisis, admonition for SBC churches to accept into worship and fellowship those of all races, and pleas for Baptists to fight racism and injustice.

Several editors commented on the election of conservative W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, as convention president; although more editorial comment was devoted to the adoption of the race statement than any other convention business.

Observing that Criswell had not been given a fair shake by the press, Illinois Baptist Editor Robert Hastings said he was encouraged by statements Criswell made in a press conference to the effect that he had mellowed on the race issue, and that his views had changed.

Editorials in the North Carolina and Arkansas papers echoed this view with Editor McDonald of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine stating: "The election of...Criswell, one who has had the reputation of being a segregationist, was viewed by some as paradoxical. But whatever Criswell has been in the past, he is now avowedly not a segregationist."

Several editorials cited the significance of the convention's refusal, in an unofficial straw vote, to approve of changing the denomination's name, and the convention's concern over the shooting of Sen. Robert Kennedy of New York.

"The assassination of Sen. Kennedy seemed to overshadow the convention," wrote Louisiana Baptist Messenger Editor James Cole.

Editorials in the Louisiana, Florida, and Oregon-Washington state papers noted that the convention was in no mood to change its name as reflected in an unofficial straw vote in which 68.7% favored the present name.

"If this says to the (Executive) Committee studying a possible change what it says to us," observed Florida Editor Stracener, "then changing the name can be forgotten for a good while to come, while we give that attention to more urgent matters."

Even though the convention refused to change its name, it is none the less changing, observed Oregon-Washington Editor C. E. Boyle. "Failure to change our name does not necessarily mean that we are incurably provincial or sectional," he added.

Whether Southern Baptists really changed during the Houston convention remains to be seen, as the messengers return to their places of local service.

As Editor Jack Harwell of the Georgia Christian Index wrote, "The real test will come in the months ahead, as local churches and their members implement or ignore the appeals of the manifesto."

Echoing these statements was the Baptist Message of Louisiana saying that resolutions are not enough: "There must be a full implementation of applied Christianity on a day-by-day encounter with all men." The Louisiana editorial called on Baptists to rediscover the "servant image" of the church.

Editor John Hurt of the Baptist Standard in Texas put it in even more forceful language. "Southern Baptists will be prominent in racial reform or there will be no reform.

"Southern Baptists will translate their crisis statement into action or they might as well have skipped the 1968 convention," Hurt wrote. "If action follows words, this could have been their finest year."

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Maryland Board Endorses
SBC Crisis Statement

6/19/68

LUTHERVILLE, Md. (BP)--The Maryland State Mission Board meeting in its quarterly session unanimously approved the Southern Baptist Convention's Statement on Crisis in the Nation.

When the question was raised as to why the state board should approve the statement if the Southern Baptist Convention had already done so, it was pointed out that the SBC statement was only speaking for the messengers in Houston. The State Mission Board in Maryland came to the conclusion that they wanted to endorse this statement for Maryland.

In addition to endorsing the statement, the State Mission Board recommended that the staff of the state convention "do all they can to help the implementation of this statement about our churches."

Secondly, they suggested that our churches study the June issue of Home Missions Magazine, particularly the suggestions for service and cooperation to further implement our work with National Baptists.

They also suggested that our churches study and make use of materials by the Sunday School Board entitled We Hold These Truths.

The State Mission Board took the necessary steps for the state convention to assume approximately \$600,000 in debts incurred by the Maryland Baptist College.

The land designed for the campus and the chapel valued at \$200,000 have not yet been disposed of. A committee of seven men with advisors that they have selected is still studying this matter.

It was announced in the state board meeting that in all probability a special state convention will be called prior to the regular meeting in November to make the final disposition of the campus.

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Baptist Standard Awards
Scholarships To Two

6/19/68

DALLAS (BP)--Annual scholarships of \$800 each awarded by the Baptist Standard to college students committed to careers of religious journalism were given to Louis Arthur Moore, a Baylor University graduate, and Ellen Kay Vandevier, student of Oklahoma Baptist University.

Moore, a graduate, has been admitted for pursuit of a master of theology degree at Southern Seminary. At Baylor, this double major was in journalism and religion. He is an ordained minister and former minister-in-training at Seventh and James Church, Waco.

Miss Vandevier, a native and resident of Shawnee, Okla., was graduated from high school in Joplin, Mo. She is to be a senior at OBU next fall, majoring in journalism.

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