



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
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August 8, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Thirty-seventh in a series)

STATEMENT OF CONCERN

by T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

No action of the Southern Baptist Convention at Houston was more significant than the adoption of the "Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation." The Statement was directed at the crisis in general but in a particular way to the racial crisis.

Among the most significant aspects of the action were the source of the Statement and the route it traveled in being presented to the Convention. It originated, not with the Christian Life Commission, but with a group of denominational leaders who felt that something had to be done and done in a hurry.

After its initial formulation the heads of all Southern Baptist agencies were given an opportunity to sign it and ultimately all of them did. State executive secretaries and editors of state denominational papers were likewise given an opportunity to sign it. The vast majority of them had done so by the time the Statement was presented to the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in its meeting immediately preceding the Convention.

The Statement was discussed for most of a day by the members of the Executive Committee and by many visitors who were present. Toward the close of the morning session the chairman of the Executive Committee was asked to appoint a committee to restudy the Statement and to recommend any suggested changes. This committee, composed of five members of the Executive Committee and three others, brought its report in the afternoon.

Again, after considerable discussion the revised report was approved by the Executive Committee with only three dissenting votes. It was then presented to the Convention as a recommendation from the Executive Committee. This added tremendously to the significance of the Statement and to the final action of the Convention.

A special time was designated for the discussion of the recommendation by the messengers to the Convention. There was considerable discussion with some amendments approved and others defeated. The final vote, taken by ballot, was 5,687 or 72.85 per cent for approval and 2,119 or 27.15 per cent for disapproval of the Statement.

The discussion and the vote in the Executive Committee and in the Convention strengthened my faith in our democratic process. I also came away from the Convention with a deepened appreciation for some denominational executives who provided much of the leadership in formulating and getting the Statement approved. There were also some laymen who spoke courageously.

Some of us believe that this action represents the turning of an important corner by our Convention. The Convention has been at the corner before. This time it went around it. A direction has been set. If Southern Baptist agencies and Southern Baptists in general will implement the Statement adopted at Houston the days ahead may be the most creatively fruitful that Southern Baptists have even experienced.

We have confidence that the Home Mission Board to which the major responsibility was assigned will provide the program and the leadership that will keep us moving in the right direction.

- 30 -

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August 8, 1968

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Thirty-eighth in a series)

EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL CONCERN

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Southern Baptists are beginning to see with increasing clarity that they need not and must not choose between evangelism and social concern. Our decision must be a both/and rather than an either/or.

The twofold emphasis on evangelism and social concern was clearly evident at the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston. It was emphasized by Franklin Paschal, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Nashville, in his presidential address. It was central in the sermon by Foy Valentine, the executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission. Consistent with his continuing emphasis, C. E. Autrey, head of the Evangelism Department of the Home Mission Board, stressed the proper relation of evangelism and social concern. He insisted that we must have both.

Some men such as Dr. Autrey may function primarily in the area of evangelism. Others such as Dr. Valentine may operate primarily in the area of applied Christianity or social compassion and concern. Let all of us, as is true of those two, have respect for one another and for our distinctive contributions to the cause of Christ and to the work of our denomination.

It should not be difficult for Southern Baptists to recognize that evangelism and social concern or ethics belong together. They were joined together in the life and ministry of Jesus. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He also went about doing good, ministering to the needs of people. He not only said "Go, make disciples," he also said "teaching them to observe or to obey all that I have commanded you."

A proper understanding of evangelism will indicate that it is much more inclusive than many of us have realized. Through evangelism the total person is brought into a vital life-changing union with the resurrected Christ. We do not "win souls" to the Lord. We win people to faith in and commitment to the Lord. When properly interpreted this relationship to the risen Lord inevitably affects every area of our lives.

In a revolutionary age it is possible that many people will not respond to the preaching of the Gospel if we are unconcerned about their daily lives and problems. The responsibility for such concern rests on individual church members as well as on churches and pastors. If we were more concerned about people as neighbors and friends we doubtless would have more of them to attend the services of our churches and more of them would respond to the preaching of the Gospel.

We can sum up the matter by saying that our social concern will not be on a sound basis unless it stems from a heart that yearns for men and women to open their hearts and lives to Christ as Saviour and Lord. On the other hand, our evangelism will be increasingly unproductive unless it is accompanied by a genuine compassion for people as people, along with a sincere desire to share their problems and to minister to their needs.

May the good Lord help us to keep these two--evangelism and social concern--vibrant and vital and in proper balance in the life and work of our churches and of our denomination.



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August 8, 1968

Christian Life Commission
Head Urges TV Moral Duty

NASHVILLE (BP)--The executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Foy D. Valentine, has urged the presidents of three national television networks to accept a moral responsibility for combatting "the increasingly violent spirit of our nation."

"We plead with you, in God's name, to accept a degree of moral responsibility commensurate with the influence which your industry brings to bear upon the families of this nation," said Valentine in identical letters to the presidents of the three television networks.

Citing television programming which depicts violence, Valentine stated: "We believe that the three major television networks must assume a degree of responsibility for the increasingly violent spirit of our nation."

The head of the denomination's agency dealing with Christian social concerns also cited "numerous expressions of deepening concern" during the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Houston recently "over the long-standing atmosphere of violence, both in words and action, which has characterized such a large number of television programs during recent years."

Valentine observed that if recent statements to the effect that the average 18-year-old has watched about 15,000 hours of television are true, then "the impressions of attempting to solve problems with violent action are deeply imbedded in his personality."

"Given certain psychological pressures and a combination of circumstances there is a likelihood of his resorting to violence to accomplish his purpose," Valentine added.

The Baptist leader added that it is encouraging to note that actions have been initiated to reduce the level of violence in television programming. "We express appreciation of this and encourage the continuation of this development."

"However, it is disturbing to note that the cynics are already at work undercutting potential progress," Valentine observed. He quoted a newspaper columnist as quoting an industry spokesman who reportedly said, "Wait until January when the cancellations come in and the competition really gets tough. People will be thinking about other things and the old stuff's going to sneak back in."

Valentine stated in response: "We trust that this dire prediction will turn out to be wrong. So much is at stake in the crisis our nation faces--the character of our children, the development of a more stable society, even the direction of civilization itself."

"God and history will be judging all of us long after the dollars have been spent," Valentine declared.

The letters were sent to Dan Durgin, president of the National Broadcasting Com.; Leonard H. Goldenson, president of American Broadcasting Co.; and Frank Stanton, president of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.

- 30 -

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Flight From Ministry To
Secular Jobs Deplored

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Many ministers have left the pastorate for other vocations because of unhappy relationships and extreme pressures, said James H. Landes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Richardson, Tex., in a speech at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here.

Deplored the "flight from the ministry," Landes told 2,600 Sunday School leaders here, "It is true that many capable men have left the pastorate for other vocations."

"Most of them, I suspect, have felt sincerely that they could work more effectively outside the organized church," said the former Hardin-Simmons University president.

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"One denominational leader recently said that more than half of the church congregations were unhappy with their ministers, and that a large percentage of the ministers were unhappy in relation to their congregations," Landes added.

"It is apparent that those of us who are pastors and the congregations that we serve must take a careful, objective, and prayerful look at ourselves," he said.

"I believe that when the pastor respects his congregation and hears them lovingly, and when the congregation understands the sincere tensions of the pastor's heart, then pastor and people can work together in fulfilling the church's ministry," Landes observed.

"Ministers who arrogantly downgrade and belittle the sincere Christian layman, and lay groups that are 'anti-pastor' are divisive, destructive, and extremely dangerous within the life of the church..." he said.

Speaking out against extremism on both the right and the left, Landes said, "There have always been extremists who would use the church for their own selfish political, social, or economic ends."

"While these extremists have accepted, with comfort, certain biblical principles, they have, as a rule, rejected other biblical principles that are equally as valid," he said. "The great majority of our people have not and will not surrender to the extremists."

"They are anxious to be loyal to Jesus Christ," he said. "They want to be intellectually honest and morally responsible Christians."

"It is the responsibility of leadership to earnestly present all of the great truths of the holy scriptures," said Landes.

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