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THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS
(First in a Series)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a nine-part series, timed to end just before the national political elections in November, on the role of the Christian in politics. The author is professor of political science at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, and a Baptist deacon. He also is author of a book published in late August by Broadman Press entitled, *The Christian and Politics*, and lecturer on the subject at Glorieta and Ridgcrest Baptist Assemblies at conferences sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Are You Just A Leap-Year Citizen?

By Daniel R. Grant
Professor of Political Science, Vanderbilt University

Although now is the season to speak of the importance of voting in the coming presidential election, it may also be a good time to place such voting in the broader context of what is required of the Christian to be an effective citizen.

At the risk of being badly misunderstood and misquoted, I must say that voting in a presidential election every four years is a "relatively" unimportant part of being influential in the American political system.

The qualifying word "relatively" is critical, of course, in understanding the meaning of the statement. I simply want to deny the widely-accepted American political myth that voting is the most important single activity of the effective citizen. Every four years during the months prior to the presidential election, our nation is flooded with appeals by radio, television, press and the pulpit to "vote as you please, but please vote." It is easy to conclude that this single act in 1960, 1964, 1968 and every four years thereafter is 90 per cent or more of the task of being an effective, influential Christian citizen.

Certainly voting is an important first step of citizenship but, relatively speaking, voting in the presidential election is probably less important as a means of influencing governmental policies than several other types of political activity.

Two in particular that should be mentioned relate to "party politics" and "pressure-gr up politics." Active and sustained participation in a political party and intelligent involvement in selected political interest (pressure) groups which best represent one's point of view in public affairs are the important keys to political effectiveness in the United States.

Too often we tend to be very proud of our voting record in presidential elections, and particularly so if we also vote in the "off-election" years. Yet if this is the extent of one's political activity, he is probably a pretty weak citizen--slightly stronger than the non-voting citizen, but not much stronger and actually not very influential.

The person whose political activity is limited primarily to voting in presidential elections might well be called the "leap-year citizen." In church terminology his counterpart is the "Sunday Christian." The currently popular religious folk musical, "Good News," includes a number entitled "Sunday's Child," about whom it is said that on Monday through Saturday "a saint he ain't!" Similarly, the leap-year citizen needs to be confronted with his weakness and to realize that presidential elections alone do not translate public opinion into public policy.

Voting frequently reflects personality preferences, such as which candidate most resembles the "good guy" in the television performance. The basic policy differences of the candidates and their parties often get lost in the shuffle.

Political scientists and historians are still debating what caused the voters in 1948 to vote for Harry Truman over the highly favored Thomas E. Dewey. It certainly provided no clear mandate on specific policy questions. Even when policy issues are important in influencing voters, who knows "which" issue caused the vote to turn out the way it did?

Free elections are the bedrock foundation of democracy and are the prerequisite for most other means of political influence. But it is naive to think that voting is 90 per cent or even 50 per cent of the democratic process, or of being an effective citizen. The figure of 10 per cent is much more realistic.

Concerning voting, this ye ought to do, but not leave the other Christians and

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August 22, 1968

**Task Force Asks Vast
Anti-Smoking Campaign**

WASHINGTON (BP)--A massive program "to protect the health of the people from the hazards of cigarette smoking" has been called for by a special task force for smoking and health after nearly a year of study of current anti-smoking efforts.

The task force, appointed by Surgeon General William H. Stewart in 1967, declares that cigarette smoking is a serious national health problem.

The far-reaching recommendations against smoking, if implemented, would involve government at all levels, churches and their agencies, the medical profession, physicians, hospitals and a wide range of private agencies.

"We believe the health dangers are so serious and the programs to meet them are, relatively, so inadequate that there is need for a vigorous acceleration in protective action," Dr. Daniel Horn, chairman of the task force, said in a letter to the surgeon general.

A 1964 report of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on smoking and health declared emphatically that cigarette smoking is a serious health risk to the individual smoker and a major health problem for the nation. Lung cancer, heart disease, respiratory ailments, bad effects on babies of smoking mothers and other effects on health on a wide scale are directly traceable to cigarette smoking, according to that report.

"There is no indication that any medical or scientific body in the world has taken the position that smoking is not hazardous to health," the new report declared. Consequently, the task force spent its energies in studying and developing plans to reduce cigarette smoking.

The task force report hit hard at the cigarette industry. It charged that one of the reasons for continued high death and morbidity rates associated with smoking "is the inability or unwillingness of the cigarette industry to face up to the health hazards of cigarette smoking or even to admit they exist."

The report declared "the public relations and political posture of large parts of the industry has been rather to attack the evidence and to pretend that a health crisis associated with cigarette smoking which now confronts the United States does not, in fact, exist at all."

The task force recommends tightened up advertising practices involving cigarettes. It views the situation so serious that it said that it "is unable to see how, in the long run, a product involving the health hazards of cigarettes can continue to be advertised."

Dr. Horn pointed out that since the 1964 report on smoking, "the cigarette industry has increased its total advertising by 50 per cent, an increase from \$200 to \$300 million annually."

During this same period the federal government has not increased its appropriations to the national clearing house for smoking and health. "There is and has been a continuing serious imbalance between the forces which encourage smoking and those which encourage cessation or restraint," Dr. Horn said.

In his instruction to the task force the surgeon general set forth three objectives: (1) to encourage young people not to start smoking, (2) to reduce the number of people now smoking, and (3) to encourage the development of less hazardous cigarettes and methods of smoking.

In response the task force brought back six pages of recommendations in five areas of action. They are:

1. Education of youth to prevent smoking. This would develop school programs from the primary grades through college for preventive education on smoking.

2. Influence on professional health personnel. The task force would find ways of increasing the positive influence of physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, etc., in reducing cigarette smoking among their clientele.

3. Group approaches to control cigarette smoking. Occupational groups, social, recreational, church, civic and service organizations could develop programs to reach their members.

4. Advertising and promotion. Increased controls and effective counter information should be developed to get the real message of smoking across to the public.

5. Less hazardous smoking. Less hazardous cigarettes and less hazardous ways of smoking should be developed in the face of the fact that many people are going to smoke in spite of all the health warnings.

Members of the surgeon general's task force were: Daniel Horn, Ph. D., director, National Clearing House for Smoking and Health; Stephen Abrahamson, Ph. D., director, division of research in medical education, University of Southern California; George M. Beal, Ph. D., professor of rural sociology, Iowa State University; Emerson Foote, member-at-large, National Interagency Council on Smoking and Health; George James, M. D., dean, Mount Sinai School of Medicine; Jenelle Moorhead, professor of health education, University of Oregon; David A. Kindig, M. D., Ph. D., past president, Student American Medical Association; Jackie Robinson, special assistant to the governor of New York for Community Affairs; Leonard M. Schuman, M. D., professor epidemiology, University of Minnesota; and Ernest L. Wynder, M. D., associate member, Sloan-Kettering Institute of Cancer Research. Kimball Wiles, Ph. D., dean of the College of Education, University of Florida, was a member but was killed in an automobile accident in February 1968.

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Coggins Says Law Mockery
Without Equal Justice

8/22/68

RIDGECREST (BP)--Declaring that "law and order is an empty mockery if we do not link equal justice with it," a former Baptist leader now with the War on Poverty told Southern Baptists here that law and order with equal justice should be the aim of all Americans.

Ross Coggins, former director of communications for the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission who now is southeast region director for Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), made the statements during Home Missions Conference at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here.

Poor people often do not see law as their friend when they see their rights being repressed, the poverty official said. "Too frequently they view the policeman as having been bought off," or working with a double standard---one for the poor and one for the middle and upper classes.

He explained that a poor man can be arrested and evicted for not paying his rent, while the same landlord is allowed to go free while he is breaking ordinances for improper care of rental units.

"Most of us have viewed poverty through a lens that filters out the facts, but we must learn to see the real facts," Coggins said.

He cited five examples of facts he felt were overlooked:

- * There is nothing ennobling (uplifting) about the poor.
- * Poverty in an affluent age is not the same as poverty in a depression age.
- * Poor people typically see law as a weapon against them instead of one to help them.
- * Poverty is devastating to the young.
- * Poverty and powerlessness go hand-in-hand. (He defined power as the ability to fulfill one's goals in life.)

Coggins quoted a VISTA volunteer who said about church participation in poverty, "If they (Christians) would only take seriously what they're saying." Coggins observed that "we have reached a sad state when because we have talked about it we think we have done something.

"It concerns me as a Baptist and a Christian that more than 40 per cent of the poverty exists in the Bible Belt," the former Baptist leader said.

"It also concerns me that the greatest opposition to doing something about it is in the Bible Belt," said Coggins.

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He added that the existence of poverty and opposition in this area "worries me, and somehow makes me desperately eager to see it reversed."

Coggins spoke to one of the smaller conferences during Home Missions week at Ridgcrest, which attracted 3,200 Baptists from throughout the nation.

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Church Refuses Pastor's
Resignation; Fires Deacons

8/22/68

MEMPHIS (BP)--Brooks Ramsey, pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Memphis, for the past five years, resigned here after "harassment" over his stand on race relations, but the church voted "overwhelmingly" to refuse to accept the resignation.

Instead, the church decided to "vacate" all 45 deacons and 15 finance committee members, asking regular church nominating committees to come up with a new slate of deacons and finance committee members.

Whether Ramsey will continue as pastor is still in question. "I have not withdrawn my resignation," he said. But he has not yet decided whether to accept the call to another church, or to remain at the Memphis church.

Within a week after his resignation was refused, the church voted in a new slate of 45 deacons, including eight new men to be ordained and about seven others who previously were deacons who had rotated off, plus a new finance committee. Only about 45 voted against the new slate of leaders out of a crowd of 500 to 600.

Ramsey described the new deacon body as "more progressive", and said that as a result "the church leadership is in the hands of more progressive people."

The opposition to Ramsey's leadership intensified when he participated in a minister's march on City Hall, urging settlement of a sanitation worker's strike, on the day after Martin Luther King was slain in Memphis. One other Baptist pastor, Robert Troutman, participated in the march.

The basic issue, said Ramsey, has been race relations. Ramsey said he had received strong opposition from "segregationists" in the church.

The race issue, Ramsey added, was compounded by a struggle for power within the church. "Some of the members who began the church after a split with Bellevue (Baptist Church) were not happy because they were no longer in control," Ramsey said.

He told a Memphis newspaper that he had received numerous calls of "harassment, anonymous letters, and now they are attacking my family."

In addition to his sermons on race, Ramsey has strongly favored a change in the church's constitution, which currently provides that if 13 members vote against accepting an applicant for membership, the applicant (as Ramsey said) "is out."

"This is the blackball system, and I don't see how a church can practice the New Testament and have this in the constitution, Ramsey said. A committee has been studying the constitution and is scheduled to come up with a report in September with a vote in October.

In June, the church gave the pastor a vote of confidence after the deacons voted 18-17 against calling for Ramsey's resignation. The vote was reported as 90 per cent in favor of the pastor, with about 65 persons out of a crowd of 600 to 700 opposing the pastor.

Ramsey said that after this, the opposition intensified and reached the point that he felt it was "impossible to continue with things like they were." Hence his decision to resign.

He said he had been overwhelmed by the support he had received, not only from the church members and Baptists across the nation, but from other denominations as well.

Ramsey said he was still struggling with the decision whether he should "stay and fight for what is right," or go where there is more freedom. He said he was encouraged now that the church is "in the hands of more progressive leaders."

A few of the church's 1,700 members have left in recent months over the race relations controversy, but Ramsey said that there has been a movement to keep everyone together, despite differences of opinion.

It is not the first time Ramsey has faced the race issue in a church he has led. First Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., where he was pastor previously, faced the race crisis when he was pastor from 1959-62.



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