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May 13, 1969

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(another in a series)

"DOCTORITIS"

By T. B. Maston

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Some ministers and churches are afflicted with the rather highly contagious disease that might properly be called "doctoritis."

There are ministers who feel that they must secure a doctor's degree. There are churches, at least pulpit committees, that will not consider a man as a potential pastor unless he has a doctor's degree.

What can we do about this disease which is entirely too prevalent among us?

Churches, particularly larger city churches, can help to reduce the seriousness of the disease. They can do this by being concerned primarily with whether or not a particular minister will provide the leadership which that particular church needs at that particular time.

If any consideration is to be given to whether or not he has a doctor's degree, such consideration should be decidedly secondary. If the potential pastor has a doctor's degree, then the pulpit committee should find out where and how the degree was secured.

The committee and church members in general need to know that there are "degree mills" where a degree largely of one's own choosing can be secured by paying a certain fee and by doing very little work.

Pastors, teachers, and others in church-related vocations can do a great deal to cure or at least to reduce the seriousness of "doctoritis" among us.

This is particularly true of persons who have doctors' degrees. They should seek to diagnose the disease and to prescribe a remedy. At least they can let others know that they would just as soon or prefer to be addressed as "Brother" or "Mister" rather than "Doctor." They should never insist on being called "Doctor." Anyone who is sensitive at this point is unworthy of the degree regardless of how hard he may have worked to secure it.

Those who do not have a doctor's degree can and should refuse to seek a cheap doctor's degree from a degree mill. Also, they can and should covenant with one another and particularly with the Lord that they will not use directly or indirectly any pull or political pressure to secure an honorary degree from a college or university.

Colleges can make some distinctive contributions to the reduction of the disease. They should seriously consider the advisability of not awarding any honorary degrees. If they are not ready to go that far, they should at least limit drastically the number granted and be sure that the degree is awarded only on the basis of genuine merit. No degree should ever be given to anyone because of pressure of any kind from any source.

Universities and seminaries can be more careful about the awarding of "earned doctorates." They should seek to weed out any who are primarily interested in the degree rather than in the added equipment it provides for effective service.

Denominational leaders on associational, state, and convention levels can contribute considerably to the reduction of "doctoritis." One simple way is to leave off all entitlements such as "doctor" in the outlining of programs, news releases, etc. Frequently, the "doctor" stands out like a sore thumb. Glancing over a program there will frequently be references to "Dr. Be," "Dr. See," and then poor old "Rev. Gee" or "Mr. Gee."

Let us be real "brothers in Christ." It would help to achieve a sense of real brotherhood if we would eliminate "doctor" from our vocabulary.

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Criswell Opposes Baptism
Of Children Under Eight

By Larry Jerden

DALLAS (BP)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention, W. A. Criswell, told his congregation that children under eight years of age should not be baptized.

"A child ought not to be baptized until he is a Junior--age 9, 10, 11, or 12; not at age four, five, six, seven or eight," Criswell said.

The pastor of the 15,000 member church devoted about half of his Mother's Day sermon to the question of the proper age for baptism. He said he knew he was doing wrong when he baptized a younger child.

A check of Southern Baptist Convention statistics disclosed that during 1968, Southern Baptist churches baptized 1,463 children under six years of age, and 36,867 children ages six through eight.

Criswell said he had wrestled with the problem of baptizing children for over 40 years, and had baptized underage youngsters mostly because of parental pressure.

"A parent comes to me and says his child, five or six years old, has accepted Jesus as Savior," Criswell said. "The Bible says a believer should be baptized. So, he says his child should be baptized.

"I know there is something wrong with that," he said. "I know that child has not reached the maturity by which he should be a member of the congregation.

"But I have not been able to convince the parents of that. So, heretofore," he added, "I have taken the little children...and held them in the baptistry...and baptized them.

"Every time I have done so I have had a self-accusation of conscience on my soul," Criswell said. "I know I am not doing right."

He said he had been pressed for the minimum age, and responded, "I am not God and I do not know.

"But," he said after listing several possibilities, "a child ought to be a Junior before being baptized."

Criswell said he knew he was doing wrong in baptizing children any younger than nine because of the number who return after they are older, saying they were not truly converted the first time, or that they could not even remember the experience.

He also said the older age is inferred, though not stated, in the New Testament.

"The whole book Matthew through Revelation, is addressed to adults," he said. "It presupposes a mature mind."

Criswell pointed out that whether the child is baptized has no bearing on his salvation. He encouraged parents in his church to continue to bring the children to him when the youngsters feel led to make a decision.

"The salvation of the child is in Jesus' hands," he said, "not in what we can do or not do. I can baptize the child or not baptize him, and that has nothing to do with it.

"Teach the child to love Jesus, and any time he responds, bring him to the front," he told the congregation. "But before he is baptized, he needs the maturity of mind whereby he can take his place in the congregation."

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Baptist Press

No More Hotel Rooms
For SBC In New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--No more hotel or motel rooms are available in New Orleans during the week of the Southern Baptist Convention, according to a report from Glen Douthit, executive director of the New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission.

Douthit, whose office handles room requests for the SBC Housing Bureau here, warned Baptists not to travel all the way to New Orleans without a confirmed room reservation, hoping to get a room when they arrived. They shouldn't come, he said.

He also warned those who have confirmed reservations to arrive on the date indicated on the reservation form, not earlier or later, for rooms are not held if the people do not show up.

Douthit suggested that because of the lack of additional rooms, Baptists attending the convention should not attempt to try to change from one hotel (or motel) to another.

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Tennessee Convention Lays
Cornerstone of New Building

5/15/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention highlighted its mid-year meeting with laying of the cornerstone for their new convention headquarters.

The board then went on to vote approval of a new cottage-style campus for the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home at Franklin, Tenn., just south of the new headquarters building.

H. Eugene Cotey, president of the Executive Board and pastor of the First Baptist Church of Murfreesboro, Tenn., presided over both business sessions and the cornerstone laying ceremony.

The new headquarters building is located in Brentwood, Tenn., about 10 miles south of downtown Nashville, about halfway between Nashville and Franklin, Tenn.

The new child care facility approved by the board for the Baptist Children's Home just north of Franklin will utilize the cottage concept of family living in a neighborhood atmosphere.

The new cottage-style campus was recommended by an advisory committee which said that "the present campus is over 50 years old and is in need of extensive repair."

The committee also stated that the old facilities with large, dormitory-type buildings are not conducive to family-style living, and that stable and trained house parents are difficult to hire and keep under present conditions.

The new site development will be at the present location north of Franklin, and will involve about 100 of the 462 acres of land on the Children's Home property just off U. S. Highway 31 between Brentwood and Franklin.

Building construction will include 10 cottages, gymnasium and activities building, commissary, maintenance and storage, and administration building. For housing of the staff, one new duplex will be built and the present Greasman Hall will be remodeled into four apartments.

Estimated cost of the new facilities is more than \$1.6 million, including site development, building construction, furnishing, equipment, engineering and architectural fees.

In a report to the board, the chairman of the state missions committee, Carl Allen of Hohenwald, Tenn., said that 135 pastors, 50 laymen, 22 music directors and five youth choirs from Tennessee would participate in the Crusade of the Americas evangelistic effort in Ohio.

In another report, Executive Secretary Fred Kendall said that promotion of church administration has been transferred to the Training Union department headed by Charles Norton.

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