

July 17, 1969

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Another in a series)

THE ASSOCIATION, THE CONVENTION, AND RACE

by T. B. Maston

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We are at a critical stage in race relations in the United States and around the world. The time is critical not only for our nation but also for our denomination and for other Christian groups.

Although Southern Baptists have made considerable progress in recent years in the area of race relations, our progress has been relatively slow and spotty. We should seek to bring our practice up to the level of the Gospel we preach and teach.

Baptist associations and associational leaders can help to sponsor and/or encourage churches in transition areas. A few white churches have stayed and sought to minister in a realistic way to the Negro people who have moved into the community.

It is frequently difficult for such churches to support financially the program of the church. This is particularly true when the church is in debt for a church building. The association or some of the stronger churches in the association should help care for the financial needs of the church in the transition area. This should be done in such a way as not to pauperize the church.

On associational and state levels there are many meetings that could and should be open to the members of all Baptist churches regardless of race. Many pastors' conferences are now open to all, but all such conferences should be biracial or interracial.

It would be a great blessing to Negro pastors and those from other groups if they could attend the Bible weeks and special conferences that are frequently sponsored by local churches or by associations. There are also numerous meetings on the state level that should be open to all regardless of race.

This is done now in some states. It should be in many more and ultimately in all. The more we open all our meetings to those of other racial groups the more we will realize that we as well as they are blessed by our meeting together.

Negro Baptists and those of other minority groups should not just be invited to our meetings. They should help to plan such meetings.

Too frequently a meeting such as an evangelistic campaign or a Bible conference is planned, and then we invite the leaders of other groups to cooperate or participate. If we expect their cooperation, let us invite them to share in the planning. Let us at the same time help them to understand that they will be welcome at any meetings that we have for our own people.

Some associations have opened the way for Negro Baptist churches to come into the association. Many more should do this. Such churches, if they prefer, should feel free to retain their affiliation with a Negro association and convention.

At least one state convention (Kentucky) has invited Negro Baptist churches to affiliate with the convention and encouraged white churches to join the Negro Baptist state organization.

Some people may raise questions about the wisdom of "double alignment," but there should be no question about the advisability of opening the door for Negro Baptist churches to come into our associations and conventions.



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July 17, 1969

**Misinterpretations Persist
On Court's Prayer Decision**

by Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--A marathon talk-fest in Congress about the Supreme Court's 1962 and 1963 decisions banning government-sponsored prayers and required Bible readings from the nation's public schools may signal an increase in efforts to reverse the court's decisions.

The "Prayer Day" in the House of Representatives gave further evidence of misinterpretations that continue to crop up concerning what the Supreme Court actually said in its historic decisions.

In the "Prayer Day" observance, Congressmen who have introduced bills asking for some kind of "prayer amendment" to the U.S. Constitution were asked to speak in support of their proposals. Only 74 of the House's 435 members responded.

Of this group, almost half were not members of the House of Representatives in 1964 when the House Judiciary Committee held extensive hearings on similar proposals for a constitutional "prayer amendment."

House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford (R., Mich.), the second speaker in the marathon, called attention to the 1964 hearings and the opposition expressed then by many religious leaders to the proposals.

He admitted that it would be "extremely difficult" to obtain a constitutional amendment "overriding the decision of the court" without the support of the church leaders in the country.

The unusual "Prayer Day" rally was promoted by Reps. Thomas J. Meskill (R., Conn.) and John H. Dent (D., Pa.). Pennsylvania is one of the states where some school districts have ordered reinstatement of Bible readings and prayers in defiance of the court's ruling against government-sponsored religious devotions.

The 74 speeches ranged from expressions of belief in prayer and dependence on God to expressing the fear that the Supreme Court's decision would result in "the divorce of God" from the nation's public life. Many of the messages amounted to statements praising "the faith of our fathers" and patriotism, and condemning secularization in society.

The tensions between these Congressional Representatives and the Supreme Court were expressed in charges that the court had brought on "secularization" and had "ruled God out" of public life.

Great emotion was expressed over the concern that the court would someday rule that the eight-inch plaque with the words "In God We Trust" would have to come down from behind the speaker's rostrum in the House of Representatives. This plaque was placed there in 1962 following the court's historic ruling on school prayers.

Many, if not most of the speakers, assumed that if a person is "for" prayer then he must also be for "prayer amendment" to the Constitution. How "God" or "prayer" are regulated by the Constitution was not explained.

Several of the Congressmen admitted that teaching religion belongs in the home and the church, but they felt that the public school authorities should "continue this training when our children are away."

Most of the spokesmen who asked for an official role in religion for public school officials ordinarily would resist expanding the role of government.

Only about 80 bills have been introduced in the House asking to "clarify" or reverse the court's decision. In the 1963-64 session, there were 149 proposals. This comparison may indicate that the prayer amendment issue is a dying one.

The Southern Baptist Convention has repeatedly stated its endorsement of the court's decision to restrain public officials from using their public office to promote religious experiences, and its confidence in the adequacy of the Constitution's First Amendment to guarantee religious freedom.

At the recent Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, messengers to the convention approved a resolution urging all agencies "to study carefully the contemporary applications of the First Amendment in the situations they face."

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Alabama Youth Commend
Governor's Smut Fight

7/17/69

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--More than 200 Baptist youth signed a letter here commending Alabama Governor George Brewer for his "aggressive effort to stop the distribution of pornographic material in our state."

The youth signed the petition during the first Alabama Baptist Coed Missions Conference at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly here.

They also commended the governor, a Baptist layman, for halting the showing of "X-rated" movies at seven theaters in Alabama.

The conference was sponsored by the Alabama Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the Alabama Baptist Brotherhood department, and combined the summer Young Woman's Auxiliary (YWA) and Baptist Young Men's conferences.

During the final session led by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Executive Secretary Baker James Gauthan of Richmond, Va., 63 young people made decisions to enter missions service.

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Elaine Dickson To Teach,
Study At Southern Seminary

7/17/69

MOBILEVILLE (BP)--Miss Elaine Dickson, who resigned recently as a consultant in program design and research for the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, will begin work in September as an instructor and doctoral student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Miss Dickson had previously announced plans to work on her doctorate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, but decided later to teach at Southern Seminary here while pursuing a doctorate in education.

Miss Dickson served on the national staff of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union since 1958. She was a Greens Lecturer at Southern Seminary last year, and is a graduate of Southern Illinois University and Southwestern Seminary.

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