



October 16, 1969

Problems of the Christian Life
(Another in a series)

THE BIBLE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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What should be the attitude of Christians toward civil disobedience which has become so prevalent in the contemporary period? Should they approve, disapprove, or should theirs be a selective approval or disapproval? By "selective" we mean selective on the basis of causes, methods, and spirit.

Some people have made an effort to bring the Bible into the present controversy concerning civil disobedience. For example, some contend that Jesus was a revolutionary and that Paul disobeyed the civil authorities. On the other hand, some would use Romans 12:1 and other scriptures to insist that civil disobedience is always wrong.

Whether or not it is correct to consider Jesus a revolutionary depends on the meaning attached to the word. His teachings unquestionably were and still are revolutionary. Nothing would produce a more drastic revolution in our world than for those who claim to be followers of Christ to take seriously his teachings and seek to apply them in their lives and to the life of the world.

If by "revolutionary" it is meant that Jesus attempted to overthrow constituted authority then we would have to conclude that he was not a revolutionary.

Also, it should be remembered, although it may not be particularly significant, that the disobedience of Jesus was against religious rather than political authorities. And even in this area his "rebellion" was not against the faith of his fathers but against the misinterpretation and the distortion of that faith.

The followers of Jesus, according to the book of Acts, found it necessary at times to disobey the civil as well as the religious authorities. The position of the early Christians was concisely stated by Peter and John when they said that they had to obey God rather than man.

The preceding means, among other things, that disobedience, from the biblical perspective, can be justified under some conditions. We know, for example, that Paul on more than one occasion was imprisoned because of his disobedience. The only specific cause that is clearly evident in the scriptures for disobedience is when the authorities forbade Paul or other disciples to preach or teach.

Of course, we should not forget the statement of the general principle that the child of God must obey God rather than man. This conceivably might mean disobedience for various reasons.

It seems clear from the biblical perspective that any disobedience by Christians should be done regretfully. Also, it should be participated in such a way as not to undermine respect for constituted authority. This means, among other things, that the right of the state to punish will be recognized as well as the right of the individual to disobey. This in turn means that there will be no attempt to overthrow the constituted authority.

If these concepts in the Bible are applied to contemporary civil disobedience, what must be our conclusions?

First, we cannot deny the right of nonviolent civil disobedience. On the other hand, we must conclude that much contemporary civil disobedience would have to be disapproved. This disapproval would be based primarily on the motive and particularly the spirit of the disobedience.

Each civil disobedience incident or movement would have to be judged on its own merits. There would be no blanket approval or disapproval but "selective" approval or disapproval.



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Mission In A New Age
Discussed At Seminary

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Two men with similar names and outlooks about world missions told Southern Baptist Theological Seminary students and faculty that foreign missionaries should be looked upon as ministers who are serving in other countries.

Two of the keynote speakers during Missions Emphasis Week at Southern Seminary here were R. Keith Parks, area secretary for Southeast Asia with the Southern Baptist Foreign Missions Board and Keith Parker, doctoral student at the seminary and missionary appointee for the International Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon-Zurich, Switzerland.

"Actually, I'm convinced that (the title of) those who have the peculiar identity as a foreign missionary doesn't mean a thing except that they are continuing the ministry they had here in another setting," Parks said.

Parker added in his speech that "a missionary shouldn't be a 'freak' any more than a pastor or a Christian social worker."

"We are all members of a mission team," Parker said.

Parks said that the Foreign Mission Board is committed to some basic concepts which help the missionary to see his role as like a minister who happens to be working in a different culture.

"One (of the concepts) is that when God got ready to communicate with this world, he did not find it possible to do so by remote control," he said.

"He didn't broadcast from Mt. Sinai or send an emissary from Rome, but rather God wrapped around Himself humanity and walked among men, speaking their language, eating their bread, and in the modes of the contemporaries of Nazareth and Judea," Parks said. "And in this way, Christ revealed God.

"We believe that if we are to communicate with the world in which we live, it takes the same kind of identity and the same kind of involvement," he said.

Parks added that some people want to be involved with high spiritual moments with God, but they don't want all the trials, tribulations, and troubles of mission involvement.

"We'd like to be involved if it can be done quickly, painlessly, spectacularly with modern means," he said. "But this kind of involvement passes like the lightning that passes across the sky, and doesn't illuminate the hearts of men long enough for them to read the truth of God."

Parker said that some people like to say missions are not relevant today and were never good.

"Such reasoning, it seems to me," he said, "is not only bad judgement but denies the dynamic nature of the church."

"The genius of Christianity has been its ability to adapt to each cultural situation, to meet each culture where it is, just as God meets each of us where we are," Parker said.

Ours is an age of change, and the church must be one of open-minded flexibility," he said.

"The methodology of our mission, wherever we serve, must be flexible and with a deeper theological basis," Parker said. "Mission in a new age is geared for new people."

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Baptist Press

Baptist TV Program
Slated On Japan TV

FORT WORTH (BP)--A half-hour color documentary film on the technique of biblical archaeology and its contribution to man's knowledge of God and himself has been slated on Japan's national educational television network, NHK, Oct. 26.

Entitled "Of Picks, Shovels and Words," the program was produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission here.

It is the second Baptist production to appear on the Japanese network. In May, the same network carried "The Inheritance," a 30-minute documentary dealing with Old Testament history as traced through artifacts and archaeological diggings in five countries.

NHK serves about 700 educational channels throughout Japan.

The program was dubbed with a complete Japanese dialogue for showing in Japan.

The English version had been shown nationally on the American Broadcasting Co., television network. It was originally produced for "The Answer," the commission's weekly half-hour television series seen on 110 stations.



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